THE SMITHS

Mrs. J. H. Probasco
Seal Rock, Oregon
July 1959

To Father Lotdell
with
Love & Best Wishes.
from
Allie & Arthur.

X Mas 1926.

THE SMITHS

THE SMITHS

By

JANET A. FAIRBANK

Author of

THE CORTLANDTS OF WASHINGTON SQUARE

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To

Three Members of the Third Generation of
Chicagoans This Book is Affectionately
Dedicated

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PART ONE—THE NEST

CHAPTER I

THE PARTNERSHIP

As Peter Smith closed the door of his machine shop behind him and stooped to fit the clumsy iron key in the lock, it occurred to him irrelevantly, but as an extraordinary thing, how much of the time a man forgot all about being married.

To be sure, there was Ann. He still retained a lively realization of his good fortune in winning her, but he had been so completely absorbed in his work that she had not entered his mind for hours. Now that he did think of her, it was to realize that her whole day had undoubtedly turned on thoughts of him, and he reflected, with the undisturbed masculine complacency of the sixties, that this illustrated, quite to his satisfaction, an important difference between a man and a woman.

A clock was striking in the slender spire of a neighboring church as he came out upon the street, and he paused to compare its strokes with the big silver watch he carried. He had an appointment with Josephus Baker. of the Chicago National Bank, and he knew bet-

ter than to be late when trying to borrow money. He had plenty of time, however, and he decided to walk.

It was a warm day in spite of the fact that it was still early spring, and Peter thought that the buds on the bare trees which lined the street had swollen since the morning. He was certain that the grass was greener in the yards behind the low iron fences. It would not be long before the Garden City burst into full summer luxuriousness, and Peter, who was a real lover of his town, thrilled to the thought, notwithstanding the gloomy errand on which he was bound.

The fine afternoon brought people out, and the avenue was animated. Vehicles of various sorts passed him, splashing with dignified deliberateness through the mud of the March breakup, and a gentleman on a horse with a flowing tail cantered dashingly in and out between them. On the high uneven sidewalks, ladies in wide crinolines walked mincingly along, holding their dolmans close about their slender bodies. Now and then a pantaletted child dangled on the outskirts of a maternal circumference, clinging to a hand stretched over an expanse of skirt, and Peter, who was but recently a father, glanced at them with mechanical tenderness.

Except for this trick of a sudden smile, there was little in Peter Smith's looks to attract the attention of the feminine passer-by. Only a close observer would note that the shaggy and romantic quality characteristic of the Civil War period to which he belonged, was dominated by something hard and possibly ruthless. He had a big jaw under his brown beard, and the eyes beneath his plume of hair were keen. He was the sort of man other men would notice.

He walked briskly, partly because a devil of energy possessed him which made it easier for him to hurry than to hold back, and partly because his lusty young manhood instinctively chose thus to minimize a slight limp which was the result of a wound received at the

battle of Antietam. His thoughts kept time to his steps. "Damn the bankers! Damn the bankers! Damn the bankers!" He wondered where he could get money if he had no luck at the Chicago National. He wondered, too, what Ann would say, and at the thought of that he walked even faster, in an unconscious effort to escape something unpleasant. All his life he had hated to admit defeat, and his wife, with whom he was very much in love, was the last person to whom he wished to confess even a temporary lack of success. . . . He shrugged his shoulders after a time, and slowed down a bit. There was, after all, no use in kicking against the trace. He had to tell Ann; he might just as well acknowledge that; he had to tell her everything. He had to keep the infernal contract he had made with her the day he persuaded her to marry him.

In spite of his irritation he softened as he recalled that day in New York. He could remember exactly how Ann had looked, sitting on a bench with him in Washington Square. She had been a little breathless, he recalled, and the sun had shone through the trees, and lay in soft round splashes on her red hair and white skin. She had been frightened, too.

Six months earlier she had nursed him after he was wounded, and he had fallen in love with her. Of course he had, for she was quite the loveliest creature he had ever seen. She was altogether beyond him, but there was nothing half-way about Peter Smith. Once in love he was sick for her, and should, by rights, have been hopeless, but he had the quality of rising to ambition, and instead of renouncing her he went to work for her, doggedly. Give him time, he told himself, and he would have her. Time was just what he did not have, however, for one day she wrote that she was going to marry a foreigner,—a great swell, with a title. Even after eighteen months of matrimony, a wave of jealous hate swept over Peter at the mere idea. He went to New

York without a plan, armed with nothing but his great desire, and he had found her panic-stricken. She had sat beside him in her rich pretty clothes, with the Italian's flashing ring on her hand, and looked at him with apprehensive eyes, while she confessed that the prospect of her marriage terrified her.

"I don't want to be a *contessa,*" she told him brokenly. "Away off in Italy!"

"You're not going to Italy!" Peter announced sternly. "You are not going to be a *contessa.* You are going to marry me this morning, and come with me to Chicago!"

These were brave words, but the young man could see no sign of yielding in his companion's face: only a dazed amazement was written there. He cast about for inducements: he felt that he had nothing to offer her in place of all that he asked her to give up. He thought that it was the arid unreality of a formal, foreign marriage which most dismayed his love, and instinctively he made his appeal one which would contrast with that. The American marriage of the sixties meant work shared, and Peter wondered if Ann's Italian had made her just that simple proposition. He could see that he caught her attention with it: the plain comfortableness of it brought a wistful look into her face.

"We'll do something big before we are through," he urged, "and we'll do it together, as partners!" That was the pledge with which he won her; it had hung around his neck ever since.

There never was any one essentially less fitted for confidences than Peter Smith, and he paid a greater price for his happiness than any one realized. Certainly his wife, who was an expansive creature, had no idea of his daily sacrifice of an inclination toward secrecy. It was entirely natural to her to tell her husband everything that happened, and she assumed this to be the normal married relationship. She

took pride in knowing all about Peter's work, and her use of the pronoun "ours" in speaking of it drove him almost distracted.

At first he had been greatly touched at the apparent ease with which Ann adapted herself to the life of a working man's wife, but he quickly became accustomed to it, and ceased to think it remarkable that the brilliantly placed girl he had married should apply herself contentedly to the drudgery of housework. There was little to remind him of her past, as her family in New York cast her off indignantly when she jilted her Italian in favor of a Chicago mechanic, and for months after her marriage she heard nothing from them. Then her uncle, Hendricks Cortlandt, with whom she had lived since her mother's death years before, relented, and came to Chicago to see her. A reconciliation of sorts had been patched up, and the breach might have been healed had not the old gentleman made the fatal mistake of offering Ann an allowance. Had he been a rich man himself, Peter would not have objected to that; it was the obvious fact that his wife needed the money which made it impossible for him to allow her to accept it. Before his marriage he had not cared particularly whether he became prosperous or not; power was what he wanted, but now he was keen to prove to the Cortlandts that he could give Ann all that they had, and more too. Because he could not yet do this, he hated all her relations, and thought of them contemptuously as snobs. He'd show them, Peter reflected. Yes, he'd show Ann, too, one of these days. His mind ran from diamonds to sealskin sacks. . . . Oil paintings, too.

All at once he wondered if he could ever astonish his wife by heaping gifts upon her. . . . He recalled her that morning, as she came out into the warm spring sunlight with him, and stood at the top of the steep flight of steps before their little cottage. She had brought the

baby with her; he was balanced horizontally on the rich curve of her hip; his bald head bobbing in helpless indignation at such undignified treatment, and his feet beating the air protestingly. The sun had shone in a dazzle on Ann's red hair; her skin was milk white in the soft radiance; her gray eyes had smiled tranquilly.

It was strange that tranquillity should have been the quality marriage had brought to her. It stirred Peter to realize that he had had it in his power to make this change in the eager creature he had fallen in love with, but a reticence deeply racial made it impossible for him to tell her so, and their relationship was remarkable because of the things they did not say.

2

He reached the bank just at the appointed time. The high black walnut doorway loomed over him as he went in, the marble squares of black and white in the floor echoed dismally to his step. The air inside seemed to him sepulchral. His heart sank.

Mr. Baker kept him waiting. He sat behind a rail, half hidden from the vulgar depositor by the high back of his walnut desk. Peter could see only the top of his head; his thin white hair was brushed back from a rosy forehead in a jaunty roll. In a vase on the desk a single red pink bloomed sturdily. He was not, so far as his caller could see, engaged with any one; now and then an obsequious clerk brought papers over to him, and withdrew, and still Peter waited, turning his hat uneasily between his hands. As the moments went on, and no one took any notice of him, it occurred to him that this delay might be a part of the game of being a banker, and he grinned, discreetly, into his hat. It made him more comfortable to suspect that "Old Baker" also was not too exalted to consider appearances.

When he was at length summoned, the great man

looked at him with discouraging coolness. "Smith?" he inquired vaguely.

"Yes,—Peter."

Mr. Baker said, grudgingly, "Sit down."

"You remember," the younger man continued, with what blitheness he could summon, "when I was in here a fortnight ago, you arranged to lend me twenty thousand dollars on my note, in order to buy an iron furnace."

The president nodded, reluctantly.

"Well, sir, my option is up to-morrow. . . . I have been looking around for orders to make sure I have enough business on hand to carry on with, but I'll have to confess I didn't get one. . . . Everything is uncertain on account of the war situation."

The banker thawed perceptibly. He allowed it to be evident that he thought better of Peter, worm though he was. "The end of the struggle is in sight," he said, "and no one knows just what industrial conditions may be when the demand for war materials is over."

Peter drew in his breath to speak, but Mr. Baker swept on. "I may say, without betraying confidence, that General Grant's vigorous measures have surprised us somewhat. We had looked for more time for readjustment. As it is, when Richmond falls,—the market may fall with it." When he voiced this horrid climax, he placed his finger-tips together, barely touching, as though it were an exquisite and important achievement, much more vital than Peter's destinies. His eyes rested on the carnation pink on his desk. "From my conservatory," he confided condescendingly. Then he swung toward his caller with the more hearty air of one concluding an interview. "I congratulate you on your wisdom in determining not to expand at this time."

Peter settled back in his chair, and smiled. "I haven't done that," he announced. "I figure the slump

will be temporary because the country needs iron. Half the bridges in the South are blown up, for one thing."

"The rebels have no money, Mr. Smith. . . . Confederate currency is worthless, and the South is devastated; there are no crops—no cattle—no labor, even. I'm told that the negroes are wandering about refusing to work, and that each one of them expects President Lincoln to give him a mule and forty acres of land. . . . If I were in your place, I shouldn't count on much from the South."

"It isn't only the South, sir . . . our northern railroads are in bad shape."

"Ah, Mr. Smith,—if I were in your place, I should hesitate to speak in that way of one of our most magnificent institutions."

"It doesn't hurt to look things in the face, sir," Peter persisted. "Half the rails in the country need rerolling, and as for new work, I shouldn't be surprised to see the Union Pacific push out to the coast when the fighting is over."

"Indian country, Mr. Smith, and vast engineering problems. I am afraid you are over-optimistic."

Peter grinned. "Every successful manufacturer is. I'm going to take up that option."

Mr. Baker ceased adjusting his finger-tips to perfect contact, and turned more completely toward his importunate visitor. "Well, what is it you want from me?"

"Further credit, Mr. Baker."

"Quite out of the question! If you persist in your project against my judgment, you must do so at your own risk."

Peter's face hardened into stubborn lines. "I believe in the iron trade," he said.

"England takes care of that very nicely. . . . And Pittsburgh."

"With ore brought here by sailing freight, and coal coming up from Illinois cheap, by canal, I don't see why Chicago can't compete successfully."

"My dear fellow, you must listen to reason. The financial situation is bad; the North is flooded with depreciated paper money, and God knows when we shall be able to retire it! If the new National Banks had not been established, we should be in chaos, sir, to-day,—chaos!" The banker paused to let this sink in, but seeing from Peter's indomitable expression that he was only waiting for an opportunity to talk further about the iron business, he hurried on. "Our war debt is already over two billion dollars. Figure it per capita! And look at our taxes! I'm a good Republican—none better,—but I feel that we have gone too far in the matter of taxation. I am willing to pay a tax on everything I wear or eat or use,—but, my God, sir,—when it comes to taxing incomes, then I say Abraham Lincoln has gone too far! Where is our country going to, I ask you?"

Peter rose to his feet reluctantly. He had no answer to this passionate query. "Well, sir, there's no use keeping you."

Josephus Baker was all benign smiles. "I hope you'll sleep on my advice," he said, "and decide against taking up the option. . . . Had affairs stood as they do to-day when we extended you the first credit, I doubt if we should have seen our way to oblige you, in spite of your having been a customer of the bank."

3

The dejection which Peter brought with him from his interview lessened as he walked down the street where he lived. . . . The baby was still awake, and not too sleepy to squirm amusingly at the rough contact with his father's beard. . . . Ann was dressed for the evening, in a green poplin as vernal as the season. She had put a little vase of dandelions on the supper table,—mean things Peter had always thought them, but now he observed a charm and gaiety in their yellow faces.

She had gone shopping in the morning, and had bought quail on a street corner, at two bits the half dozen. . . . Peter liked quail, notwithstanding the fact that they could be had for the shooting, a mile or so west of town. Their recently acquired hired girl had a way of splitting open and broiling them which he thought delicious.

Ann agreed with him. "Quite as good, really, as a roast," she said. "If they weren't so common, I believe that they might be thought a great delicacy."

Peter's cup of strong tea was heartening, too, after a hard day, and there was his favorite dessert,—bread pudding; and a sauce flavored with whisky,—a touch of sophistication brought from Hendricks Cortlandt's house which always made him feel like a man of the world. In spite of the banker's ultimatum, he felt extraordinarily cheerful as he pushed his chair back, replete.

After supper they sat, as usual, in the tiny front parlor, where a glass lamp stood on the exact center of the marble topped table. It was fitted with a white shade, cleverly fashioned in *bas relief* through which the light shone, bringing out the design. There were six panels: one showed a little girl displaying more of her chubby anatomy than little girls one saw in life, hugging a pet cat; another pictured a young lady, accoutered with a muff and tippet, seated demurely in church. A third was a skating scene, where ladies in crinoline flew along like ships with stunsails set. It was a delightful shade, full of human interest. . . . A black walnut sofa was placed in the exact center of the side wall. There were two square panels set into the uncompromising back, upholstered in a buff material woven in a design of flowers and birds; the narrow seat was covered with the same gay stuff. The two armchairs which went with it were drawn to the table and the lamp. Between the windows a "what-not" stood,

on which were set out the family ornaments,—a pair of blue china vases with flowered fronts, a velvet box with shells glued on it, a lady's hand, in marble, and a Chinese fan, open, on the top. . . . There was a mantel in the room, but the fireplace was papered over, and an air-tight stove stood before it, so that its effect was somewhat marred. On the under part of the table there were two books,—a Bible, and a gift book of poetry by Byron, which gave the entire room an iconoclastic air.

There was also a partly filled bookcase with glass doors at the end opposite the windows, for Peter was developing into what was known as a "great reader." He was determined to overcome his lack of technical education, and every evening he read eagerly, albeit slowly, the wonders of metallurgy in the thick volumes of Muspratt's *Chemistry Applied to the Arts and Manufactures.* Ann was naturally more dependent upon reading than her husband, but Muspratt was too much for her. Current novels and the poetry of Mr. Alfred Tennyson were what she browsed upon. . . . She read only for pleasure; she couldn't understand Peter's reading for profit.

When they were seated, she glanced keenly across the table at her husband. "What's the matter?" she asked.

Peter shifted uneasily in his chair. He had not realized that she knew anything was wrong. "Old Baker won't let me have any further credit," he said, "and I'll need money to carry me while I'm getting started. As it is, with what I've put by and the sale of the old shop, I have barely enough to buy a new plant. . . . Times are bad. . . . There will be the big pay-roll to meet. . . . I'll have to find some one who'll give me credit enough to keep going on."

Ann leaned eagerly forward. "Peter, I can get you what money you need."

"You mean,—from Mr. Cortlandt?"

"You could pay it back."

Peter brought his clenched fist down on the table with such force that both Ann and the little lamp jumped. "Damn it, Annie," he shouted, "you keep out of this! It's not your business." He glared fiercely across the table into his wife's startled eyes.

Hot indignation arose in Ann. "It's just as much my business as yours!" she retorted. "I think you treat my uncle badly. I don't want his money,—but when it would make him happy . . . and help you get on—" Her eyes filled with foolish feminine tears.

"I don't need his help," Peter said doggedly.

"You'll give up the new works?"

"If necessary." In his heart Peter knew that nothing would make him give up the new works, but he took an unreasonable pleasure in withholding this information from his wife.

She looked at him keenly across the lamp which was their vestal flame. A look fully as stubborn as his own came into her level gray eyes.

CHAPTER II

NEW FRIENDS

It was characteristic of Peter that he had no regrets when, a fortnight later, he left his shop for the last time, and closed the door on so significant a part of his past.

He could hear the distant shouts of a newsboy, and he made out the word "Richmond." The capture of the place was imminent, and that was his army, with General Grant,—the army with which he had fought for two years, when it had known few victories. For a moment he wished that he were with his old comrades, besieging a desperate town, and feeling the last wild heart-beats of a conquered South. That would be something like! There was, he thought ruefully, nothing triumphant about the life he had got himself into these days. When he was actually face to face with his puddling furnaces it was not so bad, for contact with them inspired in him a desperate courage, but at night, waking, contrary to his habit, in the interminable dark hours, he faced a horrid dread of failure, and could not go to sleep again. He knew that Ann must be disturbed a score of times by his restlessness.

At the first corner he turned abruptly from the thoroughfare and struck off across a vacant lot where a footpath cut a diagonal in virgin prairie soil, still inviolate in the midst of the city. After a few moments' walk, a square old masonry building stood up before him: over the main entrance hung a sign that was glar-

ingly new:—"Peter Smith," in large print, and underneath, in smaller script, "Iron Works." Peter stood still, facing it; he was conscious of an unmanly catch in his throat. It was his. It was, to-day, more his than anything else in the world, and he wanted to keep it. . . . He wanted it as a child wants a toy; he could have roared for it if it were taken from him, and absurd as he knew it to be, he couldn't help a foolish elation at the ownership, be it never so temporary, of this commodious building, bought with the savings of his lifetime, at the peak of the market. . . . An iron mill! His iron mill! He peered through a window at the puddling furnaces, ready, on the morrow, to take up their fiery, belching, indomitable life. If he were going to fail, he hoped at least it wouldn't be before he had a good chance at those furnaces. He had wanted a plant like this for years.

Some one was climbing the steps behind him, and he swung around. A tall, loose-jointed man in a blue uniform stood looking at him with twinkling blue eyes.

"B'God," he said pleasantly, "I'm right! It's Pete!" He thrust out a huge hand, jovially.

"Jeff! Well, I'm damned! Where have you come from?"

"Virginia. I picked up fever and ague in the Wilderness Campaign, so they sent me up."

"What are you doing here?"

"Looking for a job. I heard the works over here were hanging out signs for hands. . . . Then I saw your name,—and you. . . . You've come up in the world since I saw you."

Peter smiled grimly. "I've been out of the fighting since Antietam," he said. "I've done pretty well. . . . We just finished up in the old shop to-day."

"You mean the one I worked in?"

"Yes."

"Maybe I might take that on. . . . I have some

money. . . . I sold my father's farm; it brought over nine thousand dollars. . . . I've thought of prospecting for petroleum in Pennsylvania, but I don't like the damned Dutch,—had a couple of 'em in my company. I've considered going out to the Rocky Mountains to look for gold, too,—but, lord, Pete, I don't know anything about gold! I'm a good workman,—or used to be,—and a shop is about all I know."

Peter's eyes brightened, and he smiled: it was a likable grin of fellowship. "There's nothing in this prospecting," he said dogmatically. "You'd lose your eye teeth in it, likely. . . . If you're looking for an investment,—why don't you come in with me?"

"On what terms? A man who brings ten thousand dollars with him ought to be better than a hand."

"We'll fix up a partnership deal,—with a lawyer. I'll give you a quarter share."

Jeff's twinkling eyes steadied to narrow points of steely blue; it was evident that Peter's proposition surprised him. "That's generous," he said briefly.

"Good workmen aren't easy to get."

"The country'll be flooded with 'em, once the army is mustered out."

"I'm satisfied, if you are."

Jeff considered, and spat solemnly over the edge of the sidewalk, into the deep spring mud six feet below. "All right."

The two shook hands solemnly, and then Peter admitted: "I ought to tell you, Jeff. I need money like the devil."

Jeff laughed, and a relieved twinkle came back into his eyes. "I reckon I guessed that, when you offered me a chance to come in as a pardner. . . . Owe something on this plant, I suppose?"

"Yes. . . . With ordinary luck I can clear it, but I'll confess it's a bad time to be starting. Even the orders I thought I was sure of didn't pan out."

"I reckon this country will never see a time again when there's the demand for iron the war has made."

Peter leaned dogmatically toward him. "My bet is that we are just starting in on the use of iron. . . . If a man has enough to carry him through an end-of-the-war slump, I figure he'll be all right. . . . I bought some pig cheap;—of course with gold at a premium, prices fluctuate so that you can't be sure;—but I think I stocked up at the right time. If we had the work we could begin rolling to-morrow,—but I've been the round of the railroad offices and had no luck."

"Maybe you didn't offer those gentlemen who let contracts enough commission?"

"I offered them practically all my profits. It's a hard game to go up against: half the railroad buyers in town are directors in iron companies;—naturally enough they favor their own concerns."

"Haven't you any friends in the right place?"

Peter scowled. "No."

"Well, I reckon there's work enough for the other plants and you, too. Rails are in bad shape, everywhere."

"They're bound to be. Iron rails are the deuce, Jeff. . . . I'm wondering if it won't turn out to be practical to make 'em of steel."

"Pshaw! There isn't a steel rail in the United States."

"Not yet, but English commercial travelers claim they will put iron ones out of business, eventually."

Jeff shot a quick look at his friend. "Wouldn't that put your rerolling plant out of business, too?"

Peter laughed. "I'm not afraid of progress," he said. "A furnace up in Michigan is making a steel bloom out of a Lake Superior ore I'd give my soul to experiment with. I believe there is a future in it."

"Well," said Jeff heartily, "if there is,—we'll have it together. I expect you to make me a fortune, boy."

Peter scowled, and his jaw set. "I don't see why it shouldn't turn out that way." He glanced up at the brave new sign. "'Smith and Jefferson Iron Works' it will be to-morrow," he said heartily. "And now come home with me for supper. My wife will be glad to meet you."

"Wife, too? You are a glutton for responsibility! Any family?"

"Boy,—six months old."

"Well, that's fine, Pete,—a boy!"

Peter smiled shamefacedly. "I'd about as soon had a girl, if she'd been like her mother," he confessed, and added, to cover this display of sentiment. "She's got red hair."

"I'll certainly look forward to seeing her,—but not this evening. I know too much to surprise a red-headed woman!" He laughed, a loud guffaw of laughter, immensely infectious. "No, honest, Pete,—I'm due back at the Soldiers' Rest. The ladies there will have the town crier out for me, if I don't hurry! I'll deposit the money to the company account to-morrow."

2

Peter walked off quickly toward home. He was eager to tell Ann his good news, and to point out to her that it had not been necessary, after all, to ask Hendricks Cortlandt for help. He was so preoccupied with his elation that when a closed carriage stopped just beyond him, and gloved knuckles rapped on the window, he was startled. It was Josephus Baker smiling from the barouche, and simultaneously with his recognition of the banker, Peter thought he must be signaling some one else. He turned. He was quite alone. The old man was opening the door.

"Good afternoon, Smith," he called genially. "Can I give you a lift? We are going the same way."

Peter assented in a daze. His most recognizable sensation, as he climbed into the carriage, was a conviction that his working clothes were out of place there: his feet, in muddy hob-nailed boots, contrasted unfortunately with the elegance of his neighbor's shoes,—varnished and elastic sided. What was he doing there? Why had old Josephus Baker, who had treated him so coldly only a few days ago, made this extraordinary overture? He was frankly bewildered, and concentrated on not betraying it.

"Moved into your new works yet, Smith?"

"Yes, sir. I expect to get things going to-morrow."

"What are you planning to begin on?"

Impassivity dropped like a curtain over Peter's face. "I'll do more rerolling than anything else, in the beginning," he said guardedly. "I have a good plant for that." He could feel the banker's keen eyes flicker over him, but he did not flinch.

"Can you take on a contract for the Northwestern road?"

"Of course I can, sir." Peter swallowed hard. "I'd be glad of it, as a starter."

"I'll see that you get it, my boy." A suspicion of a twinkle crossed the glacial façade of the banker's face. "Can you get right at it?" he demanded.

Peter paused judicially: he was careful not to make his hesitation too long: he, too, played poker. "We-ell," he said, "not immediately, of course, but some of the work I have ahead I could put off. When we begin on it we'll push it through fast," he finished reassuringly.

The banker smiled, and leaned back against his cushions. Here was a young man who might go far. Strange how he had misjudged him, that day he came to borrow money! That was one drawback in being a banker, he reflected: ordinarily one saw young men only at that unfortunate moment. "Smith," he de-

manded, "why didn't you tell me that you are a nephew of Hendricks Cortlandt?"

"I'm not," Peter said, glowering.

"Nonsense! I had a letter from him only to-day. He said your wife was a great favorite of his,—that he had always looked upon her as a daughter."

"My wife,—yes. He's no relation of mine."

"My boy, that's an ungracious attitude to a man like Hendricks Cortlandt."

"When I am on my feet, I'll be as friendly as he likes." Peter smiled his unexpected smile, and all at once the banker liked him, in spite of his recalcitrant stand.

"I trust that you will forget our last conversation, and come to us for further credit."

"Thank you," Peter said, proceeding, now, with caution. "Thank you, sir, but I won't need it."

Baker turned mournful eyes upon him. "You've been to another bank!" he ejaculated, as he wondered who had been a wise enough fool to back this unknown young man he had prudently denied.

"No, sir. I found an opportunity to put my hands on some capital,—that's all."

"I see. . . . Well, remember that we want to keep your account, Smith. . . . A lovely day, is it not? Fine weather for the races."

The younger man kindled. "That is the king of sports, isn't it, sir? Before I was married, I used to watch the cutter races on the river every Sunday, and if I had the time I should never miss a meet at the Driving Park."

The banker smiled. "I hope you don't bet."

Peter smiled grimly. "Not yet, I don't," he replied briefly, and for a moment the close interior of the carriage was filled with a sense of his conviction that in time he would be in a position to plunge magnificently.

"I should like to meet your wife, Smith. Do you think I might go in with you for a moment?"

"Of course, sir. She would be pleased." Peter's tone was decently warm, but his heart misgave him. What would this new and powerful friend beside him think of his little house,—and of Ann, taken unawares, and dressed, very likely, it being wash-day, in every-day print?

3

His home had never seemed so humble to Peter as it did when the banker's carriage stopped before it. Nora came to the door. She stood in the opening for an instant, smoothing her blue-checked apron, and staring with round Irish eyes at Peter's fine companion.

"Come in, sir, now do," she said at length, and stood aside, still staring. She had been roasting coffee berries in the oven, and the whole cottage was filled with their delicious and inelegant odor.

Peter could feel appraisal in the banker's discreet glance. He wished that the oilcloth which covered the parlor floor were not so worn, and that Ann had not left a great round basket of mending on the marble-topped table.

She came in, after Nora's audible summons, and Peter looked at her critically, as he might have at a stranger. His worst fears were realized; she wore a common print dress, but she was entirely at ease. He thought she was pleased to find an elderly stranger sitting on her meager sofa, his silk hat balanced between his carefully tended hands: she somehow gave the impression that bank presidents came to call every day. She looked at her visitor with friendly, pretty eyes, and as they talked she made him laugh occasionally, but Peter was really too disturbed to follow what she said. Suddenly she turned to him, imperiously.

"Peter,—it is a very warm day,—unseasonable, really,—for this time of the year. I wish you would bring us some of that elderberry wine I made and some cakes, on the tray."

Peter rose uncertainly, and she turned to Baker with a twinkle of worldly understanding.

"Our hired girl is very good, really,—but she could never manage this correctly. She has only lately come from Ireland, poor little thing." She leaned against the righteous sofa back, and spread her calico skirts out over her hoops, with an air of the greatest elegance.

Peter went off, and as he hunted up glasses and plates, he could hear continuous talk, broken by laughter, from the parlor. He shook his head, impressed. He never could take for granted complete social poise, and consequently he exaggerated its importance. Ann was a wonder, he acknowledged, in deep relief.

When Mr. Baker, refreshed and plainly impressed, had taken his reluctant departure, Peter turned exultantly to Ann. "My dear,—it's all right!"

"The old duck! Is he going to let you have some money?"

"He would, but I don't need it. I found an old friend this afternoon and sold him a share in the business."

To his amazement, Ann's face puckered into laughter. "You don't mean it? What a joke!"

A light broke upon Peter. He took her by the shoulders, and shook her, none too gently. He tried to meet her eyes, but she would not look at him. "Annie, did you write to Hendricks Cortlandt?"

She faced him, at that, with some spirit.

"Yes,—I did. I just said that if he knew your old Baker I wished he would write to him and tell him what a monstrously clever young man you are. . . . Oh, Peter,—you're not angry with me?" She lifted imploring eyes to him,—she who had been so trium-

phantly successful, only a moment before, with one of the big men of little Chicago.

Peter was puzzled, and looked it. He was red in the face with anger at Ann's duplicity, but at the same time her fright touched him. He wanted to put his arm around her, and tell her, falsely, that it was all right, but he didn't. Instead, he murmured coldly, "We will say no more about it." He said to himself, "I'll be careful what I tell her, after this."

CHAPTER III

THE FALL OF RICHMOND

THE following morning Nora rose, as usual, at five o'clock. She was young and strong, and life was exciting; regrets for her bed were evanescent. In no time at all she was in her kitchen, cajoling a temperamental stove.

Her duties were numerous. There were three meals to prepare every day, innumerable dishes to wash in a primitive sink, the kitchen to be kept spotless, the bedroom to tidy every morning, and a ceremonious weekly cleaning of the entire cottage to be achieved, when sheets were draped over the less portable pieces of furniture, strips of wet paper were scattered over carpeted floors, and a broom was wielded valiantly. On Mondays and Tuesdays there was the washing and ironing to do, and on Wednesdays and Saturdays the baking. Nora could not have been said to have time on her hands. She had a quick step about the house, a face that always smiled, and a habit of singing wild Irish songs when Ann was away from home. This very morning, she had difficulty in suppressing outbursts of melody which sprang at her unawares.

Having started the fire, put on the teakettle and stirred up the buckwheat batter, she went to the front door to shake from the mat the mud which Peter always brought in with him. A man was swaggering down the street.

"Hello, sweetheart," he called. "Richmond has fallen!"

"Richmond!" The name meant nothing to Nora, but she sensed its importance. She ran to her mistress's door and knocked upon it. "Oh, ma'am,—Richmond's fallen!"

Ann leaped to the door, and flung it wide, unmindful of Peter's decent protests. "Where did you hear that?" she demanded.

"A man was cryin' the news!"

As she spoke faint sounds of shouting came through the hygienically closed bedroom windows; then suddenly the shattering sound of light artillery fire rent the morning; it was followed, almost before its echoes died away, by the boom of cannon from the south.

"It must be true," Peter said. "That is from Camp Douglas."

They hurried to the window. Neighbors were already gathered on their front steps, in all stages of undress: across the street a man in a nightshirt was hanging a flag from his porch.

"It has come, at last," Ann said solemnly.

Her husband tried to draw her to him, but she eluded him for an instant, and then flung her arms about him with a passion wholly sexless. She was very strange. In a moment he could see that she was in tears. "Annie," he protested, cheated of his elation, "what are you crying for, now that it is all over?"

She turned her swimming eyes to his. "I'm thinking of Baby," she confessed, "and of mothers this day has come too late for."

To his intense annoyance Peter found that his own eyes were wet, and he blinked, angrily, but Ann paid no attention to him. The baby was lying, placid and content, in the walnut crib beside his parents' bed and she lifted him ecstatically, and kissed his fat neck until he squealed with the pure joy of it. Finally she in-

sisted that their flag should be out, and, half dressed as she was, she ran to hang it from the front porch: she paid no attention at all to her husband's scandalized expostulations. "I don't care!" she called, twisting up her hair as she ran. "I'm going to be perfectly abandoned to-day!"

She looked across the street as she was fixing the flag, and saw a neighbor, a girl who had just moved in, doing the same thing. "Isn't it glorious?" Ann shouted, exulting as her stars and stripes caught the breeze, and ballooned out bravely. What a day! What a day!

She ate her breakfast absent-mindedly. . . . She had been barely more than a little girl when the war began. . . . How strange to have it over! No war? She could with difficulty imagine such a condition. . . . No slaughter of young men. . . . No wounded. . . . No camp fevers. . . . Nothing, any more, to hang heavy on one's heart even in one's most joyous moments. . . . Life could be different now. . . . Life could be triumphant.

Presently she carried the baby off, and the house became very still. After a while Peter crept over to the bedroom door, and opened it to peer into a darkened room. Ann sat rocking gently back and forth in the big chair by the window, nursing her son; the only sound was the regular creak of the rockers. Her arm held the baby close, and her hand against his little body had a tender look. Her whole figure drooped maternally. Peter backed out and shut the door softly.

In a few moments she appeared, dressed in a brown taffeta she had had when she was married; she wore with it a straw bonnet which, tilted up behind by the mass of her chignon, slanted rakishly down over her eyes. It was extraordinarily becoming. "He's asleep," she announced in a triumphant whisper, "and I'm going out with you. Nora can look after him."

Nora, lurking in the background, beamed at this proof of trust. "It's good care I'll take of him, ma'am," she assured her mistress.

2

The two ran up the street to the corner; the car was coming stoutly along, and the bell on the neck of the horse which pulled it rang gaily on the fresh morning breeze. Two more passengers could barely squeeze in; there was a great lurch, and they were off.

It was very gay in the car, like a successful party. Every one was congratulating every one else, and a stout gentleman near the front kept repeating in a comic falsetto voice, "The last big thing of General Grant's, by gum!" Once, in his enthusiasm, he reached out with his cane, and smashed the hat of a somewhat mincing little man seated near him. Every one laughed, including the victim. It was all delightfully comic.

At the river Peter dragged Ann from the car. The ships were being dressed with flags, and the street from the bridge to the lake was blazing with them. No one had any idea of working that day, and at the Smith and Jefferson Company the men were only waiting to be dismissed. They all tumbled out together, uproarious and joyful.

All this time the court-house bell had been adding its peal to the confusion of sound, and Ann was eager to see what was happening over town. "Peter,—do come! I'm sure there will be speeches in the court-house square."

The bridge was jammed with people; it rocked drunkenly under their feet when a near-by band struck up, and every one stamped the time ardently. On the opposite side an impromptu procession was forming: Ann and Peter paused to watch it get under way. A volunteer artist had, with miraculous speed, painted

portable signs. One read "Richmond," and as they came up he was finishing, with a flourish, and in large straggling letters, "Abe Lincoln!" There was confusion and milling about as the musicians tuned up, but with the first notes of *The Battle Cry of Freedom* the band began to walk away, and at once, with the effect of a miracle, the whole mess unraveled itself into a fairly orderly parade. The men locked arms across the street, and at a near-by corner a group of workmen with teams fell in behind them. The demonstration became a procession.

There was a great crowd before the *Tribune* bulletin board. For four years men had never passed that corner without stopping to read; they had sorrowed there, and rejoiced, but never had there been such a delirium of joy before. Ann felt that she had really not believed the good news until with her own eyes she read the words, "Richmond fallen!" It hit her all over again,—incredibly good fortune. As they waited, some one came out and wrote that colored troops were the first to enter the conquered town, and the cheering became deafening. Even self-contained Peter was shouting himself hoarse. Three immense flags hung before the *Tribune* building; they flapped idly back and forth, throwing rippling shadows over the upturned faces of the standing crowd. In front of the entrance a dignified old eagle, aloof and alien, sat sourly on an improvised perch festooned with red, white and blue ribbons; the crowd cheered him enthusiastically.

A drummer and a lad with a fife were standing on the steps of the court-house as Ann and Peter came up, giving the crowd the latest martial hit, *Marching through Georgia.* Everybody sang it, hugely. . . . On the corner a German saloon-keeper had broached a barrel of beer on the sidewalk. He offered a great mug of it to Peter. "Now I'll get *mein sohn* home, maybe!" he said joyfully, nodding his head at the lady.

3

Presently Peter plucked at the flutings on Ann's sleeve. "That is old Baker's bank," he told her. His voice gave him away: he was, his wife observed, just a trifle impressed by the tight façade to which he called her attention.

She looked up at the discreet doorway. "Chicago National Bank" was outlined in gold letters over it. In the narrow windows to the right of the entrance a number of persons were seated, remotely enjoying the spectacle of the crowded street. In their midst she could see Mr. Baker's white head, and rosy benign face.

"Come on," Peter urged her. "They'll think we are staring."

"We are," Ann replied tranquilly. "Which is Mrs. Baker, Peter? Do you think she can be the old one?"

At that moment the banker's idle glance fell upon them, and he rose from his seat, electrified. His face beamed, and he made violent and incoherent gestures.

"He is a silly old man, Peter,—but I think he wants us to come in."

"We don't know all those people!"

"What of it? If they are bores we needn't stay."

This point of view inflated her husband, but somehow it failed to make him more comfortable. He hated the idea of risking himself among all those important men and women: he wasn't ready for that, yet. "They'll think we were hanging around waiting to be asked," he protested.

Ann looked at him superbly. "What odd ideas you have!" All at once she wanted very much to join those privileged men and women. Seeing them there, removed and at their ease, she was reminded of her own earlier days, and for the first time since her marriage she was conscious of a faint regret at her complete loss of a position which had entitled her to like privileges.

Suddenly, while Peter was drawing her away, Mr. Baker appeared on the steps. He plunged toward them through the crowd.

"Come in! Come in!" he called genially.

"I should like to," Ann told him, smiling, "but I can't stay long. I have an appointment."

Mr. Baker enclosed her elbow in a parental clasp, and urged her toward the bank. "No appointments stand to-day; even the courts are closed."

"What a pity no one is suing me for anything! . . . My appointment is with the nicest gentleman I know." The banker paused at that, and she added, "My son. He is six months old."

"A son! What do you call him?"

"Baby." She drew a quick breath, and daring flashed into her face. "But his name is to be Hendricks Cortlandt."

Peter turned red. He had not yet agreed to call his son by that alien name, and here Ann was, taking a base advantage of him!

Mr. Baker was all approval. "It is a name to be proud of. Have you had the christening?"

"Not yet."

"You must allow me to come. . . . I should like to see another Hendricks Cortlandt started on his way."

Peter was furious, but as they crowded into the doorway. Ann managed to squeeze his hand, unseen, and she flashed him a malicious grin of triumph which unfairly made the whole thing seem less unfair. In spite of himself, he felt his righteous anger dissipate.

Inside the bank, there was a room full of strangers to meet. Peter hated it, and as Ann floated off with a group of ladies, he was attacked by puerile panic. . . . When he found himself finally seated on a chair on the outskirts of the group, he saw that his wife was in the very center, talking to Mrs. Baker, a wrinkled old lady who basely betrayed her husband's age by

looking her own. She was consulting Ann, with breathless anxiety, about the scallop on her crocheting, and she spread it out on her fat knees, scarlet, black, green and white intricately mixed, with a border of black and yellow. "I'm not sure it's the thing," Peter heard her say anxiously. "In New York, now—did you ever see it used?"

Ann bent a politely solicitous face over it. "I think it is immensely stylish," she said reassuringly. "What an elegant stitch!"

Outside, the pandemonium continued. Bands and artillery were marching about through the dense crowds, but from the sanctuary of the bank it all seemed remote. Mr. Baker insisted that Ann must have a glass of wine, and he opened several portly lunch baskets in search of his claret. Mrs. Baker went to help him, and presently it seemed to Peter that every one was involved in a gigantic effort to give his wife a glass of wine. He wished miserably that she would refuse it, and he shook his head violently at her, but she only lifted politely inquiring eyebrows at him, and murmured to old Baker that she was thirsty, after walking about in all that rabble. It was too early for the others to eat, and Peter felt that his delicate sandwich would choke him, feasting there alone with his wife, with everybody looking at them. Ann ate three, murmuring compliments to Mrs. Baker as she did so, and she drank her glass of claret with a deliberateness which filled Peter with a sort of awe.

On the street they were caught by the thick of humanity again, and Ann held tight to Peter's arm. "This is much nicer!" she shouted. "Look,—there's a man going to sing!"

They fought their way across the street, and stood before the steps of the court-house, where a brazen-voiced baritone was singing *Old Shady*. The familiar, plaintive melody caught them in the glamour of the

romantic South, and the touching triumph of the words stirred them deeply, on this day of all days. "Let's go now," Ann whispered, as he finished, and all the way back she sang, below her breath, snatches of the song.

"Oh! yah, yah, Darkies, laugh wid me!
For de white folks say Ole Shady am free,
So, don' yo' see dat de Jubilee
Am a-comin',—comin'! Hail! mighty day!

"Den away, away, for I can't stay any longer;
Hooray! Hooray! for I's a-gwine home!

"Ole Mas' got scared an' so did his lady,
Dis chile he break for Old Uncle Aby,
Hail! Mighty day!"

They could hear the baby crying as they hurried up the steps: it was the first time in his pampered life that he had been forced to wait for his dinner. Ann took him, and he screamed the louder; his anger was intensified at the sight of his guilty parent. It was not until she fed him that he quieted, and then gulps of sobs made him choke, pathetically. His mother, looking abjectly down at him, saw a tear-drop shining on his fat cheek.

Later, when she joined Peter, she was subdued and extraordinarily mature. "Did you enjoy it to-day?" she asked wistfully.

"Didn't you?"

"It was fun. . . . But I like it better just with you."

Peter reached out and took her hand; her fingers closed around his eagerly. "We have to take our place here, Annie," he said reasonably.

"I suppose so." She sighed, and her eyelids drooped. She was often sleepy, after nursing the baby. "But it is very sweet,—just you and me,—and little Hendricks Cortlandt."

CHAPTER IV

NEIGHBORS

Ann speedily forgot all about the girl across the street to whom she had shouted rejoicings when she hung out her flag, but the stranger cherished the memory of the friendly overture. To her it was an event.

Susanna Wilcox was desperately lonely in the little cottage on Loomis Street, possibly because she had looked forward to being happier there than she had ever been before. She had lived a life of considerable privation and no privacy, and getting away from it into these comparatively expansive quarters had seemed at the time of moving too good to be true. For as long as she could remember she had shared with her mother a succession of rooms in dreary boarding-houses,—shabby places where the breeze never came in summer nor the heat in winter, and where the two women were always tumbling into each other in hateful propinquity. This was bad, but life had its alleviations, for she was a gregarious creature, and she never had unoccupied time on her hands. At the boarding-house there had always been people to talk to,—not necessarily attractive people, perhaps, but Susanna early realized that boarders can not be choosers; she grew up accustomed to having some one always about with whom an idle hour might be passed.

She had worked in the city as assistant bookkeeper in the Palmer, Field and Leiter Dry Goods Store. She

spent hours every day bent over huge ledgers, but she managed to snatch time for genial talk with the other girls in the Accounting Department. Together they discussed the styles, and whispered criticisms of the head bookkeeper.

It had been a thoroughly sordid existence, and it had seemed to lead down a dreary perspective to eternity, but a miracle had intervened. Susanna had been the careless possessor of an uncle, her father's brother, whom she had never seen. Indeed, she had scarcely ever given him a thought, and yet he proved to be the cog upon which her life was to turn. It developed that he had never made a will, and had no relation nearer to him than the unknown niece in Chicago: on his death what money he possessed went, by the mysterious processes of the law, to her. Susanna had often indulged herself in day-dreams of rich uncles, and inheriting from them was a familiar climax, but when she found it actually happening she could scarcely bring herself to believe it could be true,—that she was, in a small way, an heiress.

To be sure, when the sum was finally in her hands, a great many of her fine dreams crashed to earth, but it was sufficient somewhat to release the two women. They talked together fearfully about how they should invest their fortune, and finally came to the trembling decision that the only safe and sure thing to put it into was a boarding-house. After one month's trial, they had two young men living with them, and Mrs. Wilcox, long a sufferer in boarding-houses, was proving successful in maintaining one. Almost from the first she was able to make a trifle more than expenses.

In the meantime Susanna had the matter of companionship on her mind. She was a pretty cozy creature, as friendly as a kitten, yet the days went by, and she had no one but her mother to speak to. The romantic episode of her inheritance seemed to be all the

luck fate had in store for her. She found it in her heart almost to regret the life she had left so triumphantly.

Susanna liked Ann's looks the first time she saw her. She had that mysterious thing, "style," which she had so often discussed with the girls in the shop. "She walks down the street as though she owned it," she said to her mother, and she gladly sacrificed the "cuteness" which had been her earlier aim, in order to copy her neighbor's unconscious arrogance of carriage. She had been an unwilling admirer, also, of the way in which her neighbor's eyes had met her own, long after she herself had become interested, had swept indifferently over the stranger's face and past her. She had to respect Ann for that, for she wasn't rude; she was simply oblivious, and dimly the younger girl understood that real obliviousness was a mark of poise. Susanna determined at that uncomfortable moment, while she stiffened the smile which trembled at her lips, to establish an acquaintance with Ann. She was a young woman who would go far. She had a real *flair* for her superiors.

2

A few days after the fall of Richmond, Titus Jefferson came to supper with his partner. When Ann went out that morning to market, pushing the baby carriage before her, she was weighing Nora's ability against traditional "high tea" menus, and did not see that Susanna Wilcox was coming down the street toward her, until the girl stopped.

"Good morning," the stranger said, looking both eager and shy. "What a lovely baby you have!" Ann was won at this evidence of good taste, but she stiffened as Susanna added, "Is it a boy or a girl?"

"A boy," his mother told her coldly, outraged be-

cause she felt that already her son was obviously a masculine creature.

Susanna leaned over the carriage to hide her chagrin, and shook lustrous black curls before the baby's dazzled eyes. He chuckled aloud, delighted. "He's a boy, all right," she exclaimed. She held out a finger, and little Hendricks grasped it tightly. "He won't let me go," she complained, laughing, and, thus held, she walked along beside the carriage.

"How old is he?" she asked.

"Six months."

"I reckon you haven't been married very long."

"Oh, a long time! . . . A year and a half."

"We have only just moved in," the strange girl confided. "We don't know any people in this neighborhood. We keep boarders," she added brightly.

"Have you your house full, already?"

"All but one room, and we are fortunate,—both our young men are very gentlemanly. . . . One of them is a lawyer from the East,—a college man, too."

At the corner Susanna left her new acquaintance, determined, on this first day, not to overdo it. Just as she was turning away, she paused. "My name," she volunteered, "is Susanna Wilcox."

"I hope I shall see you soon," Ann said with some eagerness. It was pleasant to be talking to a girl again.

3

Ann liked Titus Jefferson from the first. His extravagant looks delighted her; she thought that he had a face like a French actor's,—mobile and expressive. The supper was a great success.

As for Titus Jefferson,—he frankly envied his friend. He looked across the white cloth at his hostess behind her tea tray, under the hard radiance of a hanging oil lamp, and thought that she was a real beauty,

notwithstanding her red hair. He liked the quiet and competent way she managed things, too; it was a lesser, but added attraction. After four years of primitive masculine life, the simple meal seemed to him hushed and peaceful as a ritual. It was delicious, too. He accepted a second helping of everything, and ate an incredible number of Nora's hot biscuits, to an accompaniment of home-made, pound-for-pound preserves. With repletion his affection for his friends grew warmer. The first supper became, on his part, a veritable love feast.

His immediate plans occupied them. "I have left the Soldiers' Rest," he told them. "I had all the coddling I could stand, so I went over to the Tremont House, but judging from what I'm paying for it, I reckon they must have given me the bridal suite by mistake. I suppose I ought to move into something less regal." He sighed as he spoke, and Ann gathered that he dearly loved magnificence.

Into her mind came a memory of the unoccupied room in the Wilcox cottage, and the artless confidence of her morning's encounter. Somewhat to her own surprise she found herself saying, "There is a boarding-house across the street where you can get a room." That seemed to settle it; for Jeff was delighted with the thought of living so near his friends, and when supper was finished they all went over to interview Mrs. Wilcox.

She brightened perceptibly at the prospect of a third boarder, and the pretty Susanna was delighted to see them. It was all entirely satisfactory to Jeff, who was in a daze of pleasure at leaving his affairs in hands at once so competent and so fair. He liked his room, littered, at the moment, with feminine sewing for which Susanna blushingly apologized, and the price was delightfully moderate. The two women who guaranteed his comfort seemed to him too good to be true.

His fellow-boarders were at home that evening. One was a druggist, an amiable creature, excessively neat, and with a salesman's nervous desire to please, but the young lawyer, lank, lantern-jawed and dark, had a look of distinction. Ann liked him at once.

After they had inspected the room, Susanna brought thin slices of pound cake and a pitcher of raspberry shrub, and the business call became a social occasion. Jeff, led on to picturesque reminiscences of recent battle, was the center of an admiring feminine group. He enjoyed himself completely: it gave him the keenest pleasure to contemplate Ann and Susanna together. They leaned toward him attentively, one all grave concern, and the other deliciously thrilled, at his narrative. The druggist hung on the outskirts, listening enviously, but Daniel Lunt, the lawyer, said cynically to Peter, "Ulysses! Queer creatures, women! It always wins them."

Peter wondered uneasily if the reference were to General Grant, and if not, who Ulysses might be. He determined to look him up in the Encyclopedia he had recently bought because it was advertised as the equal of any college education. Lunt, rather taken with the serious, stocky fellow, who had turned up with a lovely wife, talked on.

"Iron business, eh? Future there, I guess. A man I knew at Harvard Law School is an attorney in Pittsburgh, and I hear from him that the iron men there are beginning to take notice of Chicago."

Harvard Law School? That sounded solid, all right. "I'm looking for a lawyer, myself," Peter ventured.

"I can recommend a good one," Lunt said, his somber eyes twinkling. "My office is in the Borden Block."

"I'll look you up to-morrow. My friend there and I want a partnership agreement drawn up."

"Ulysses, eh—and Vulcan? Well, I'll be delighted

to see you, of course. I've had some experience in that sort of work."

When they went home, they walked to the corner to avoid crossing the muddy street, and Ann found herself strolling down a moonlit walk, soft with early April's sweetest moment, beside the tall young New Englander.

"What are you doing here?" he asked her at once. "Obviously you don't belong with all of us—outsiders."

"I like the outside," Ann declared. "It's—livelier."

Lunt laughed. "At first," he conceded grimly.

"Anyway—you're not an outsider. I can see that. . . . And Miss Wilcox is charming."

Lunt did not answer her at once, and glancing at him Ann was surprised to see that his face had taken on a forbidding look. "Yes," he said at length, "she is very charming." She thought that he would continue, but he did not, and their talk died an uncomfortable death before they reached the corner.

CHAPTER V

A BREACH OF FAITH

To Titus Jefferson, newly released from the constraint of enlistment, Chicago was an exciting place, and while Peter was mastering his furnaces, his partner wandered about, frankly a prey to the seductions of the wide open "Garden City." In the Clark Street gambling palaces his ungainly figure became known to professional poker players and to blacklegging lottery sharks, and he was hand in glove with war contractors and bounty jumpers who had flocked to Chicago during the four years of fighting.

With a lavish hand he kinged it in this flaunting underworld; men and women alike made him welcome, and gathered about him roaring at his boisterous laughter, and at the antic humor he had at his command when he had a drink or two of Kentucky whisky. He was never drunk, but he was continuously stimulated to a freakish wildness which disturbed his more serious partner. Peter was no prude: he understood the charm of freedom in a city following years of campaigning, but observing Jeff's complete abandonment, he began to wonder if his partner would ever settle down. The days when Titus and he had labored side by side at a bench seemed very remote.

A fortnight after the new works opened, Titus turned up and followed Peter out into the shop. He had an irritating look of leisure and well-being. He

said genially, "You're a hell of a boss! Why aren't you sitting in the office behind a roll-top desk, giving this plant style?"

Peter looked at him grimly. The strain of bringing the works into production had told on him, and the chemistry of his nervous system had been altered by it as surely as carbon had altered the chemistry of his iron. Something soft and malleable had gone out of him, too. "I don't know if it will interest you to hear it," he said coldly, "but the Northwestern Road has given us a rerolling job. It's our big chance, of course, and I haven't been able to lay my hands on a satisfactory foreman. I can run the works myself half the time, but we'll have to keep going twenty-four hours on a stretch to get the bonus they offer for early delivery. They figured damn close on the contract; the bonus is our only hope of making a profit. . . . I don't plan spending much time in the office yet a while."

Jeff stretched himself luxuriously. "I've reached the end of my string," he announced blithely, "and there's very little I don't know about this town. What's the matter with making me foreman?"

Since the beginning of Jefferson's excesses Peter had suspected that when his money gave out, the prodigal would appeal to him for an advance. He had been steadying himself for a refusal, and his relief at this unexpected proposition shook the stoical composure upon which he prided himself. "Nothing that I can see," he said, beaming.

His partner replied reassuringly, "I'll turn up in my working clothes to-morrow morning."

2

Jeff left his partner with the intention of inviting Susanna to go for a buggy drive, but she was not in the cottage, so he strolled across the street to call upon

Peter's wife. He had formed a habit of frequently dropping in to see her: the baby had an irresistible charm for him, and he liked Ann in an impersonal way which was new to him.

That afternoon he told her the story of his turbulent youth: "I was raised on a farm in Ohio:—I reckon that's why a city means so much to me. There was only my old man and me. We fought from the time I was knee-high. When I was fifteen, I ran off and got a job with a blacksmith ten miles away, in a fair-sized town. Pa found me, but not until I had been there long enough to know what I wanted."

"What was it?"

"Folks. . . . Men and women. When I was eighteen, I ran away for good. I came out here and went to work. Pa would never have forgiven me if it hadn't been for the war. He was a good Union man, and he got to be real proud of me. . . . In the beginning, I came near going south to fight with the Johnny Rebs, but he never knew it. I was traveling with a Copperhead crowd, you see.

"Pete and I worked at the same bench when I first came to Chicago, but he was always a better man than me,—steadier, and more ambitious. I never saw such a fellow to know what he wants. . . . He'll be a big man out here some day. He's got power. He's made a good start getting that Northwestern contract."

"A Northwestern contract?" Ann repeated incredulously. She had heard nothing of it.

Jeff was oblivious to the sudden shrillness in her voice. "Yep," he said lightly. "I'll bet a dozen concerns were after that job of rerolling, but Pete landed it."

"I see." Ann rose from her chair and walked over to the window. The afternoon was waning. Peter would soon be returning. It was the first time in her married life that she had not looked forward with

pleasure to the event of his homecoming. Now, she wanted time to think.

"I'll have to put the baby to bed, Jeff," she told him, and wondered at the complete naturalness of her voice.

"I wish you'd let me play with him a while," Titus protested. "I don't see any sense in being particular about when they go to sleep."

Ann did not either, but that evening she was adamant, and she sent Titus off across the street to supper with Susanna.

3

There was something accusing in the silence with which Ann greeted Peter when he came in, which immediately created antagonism in him.

"What's the matter now?" he inquired, regardless of the fact that no rift had preceded the one which seemed to be mysteriously imminent.

Ann confronted him. "I understand you have a contract with the Northwestern Railroad." Her voice was icy.

Peter scowled. "It didn't take Jeff long to run and tell, did it?" he demanded. His voice was belligerent, but he was wishing that he had told Ann about those damn rails in the first place. He didn't know why he hadn't; it was something he didn't clearly understand.

"When did you sign it?"

"About ten days ago."

"I thought we were to be partners."

"Well, aren't we? I take care of the works and you take care of our home. Isn't that a partnership? My job is to earn money, and your job is to keep house, and learn how to cook."

So saying, he cleverly established the debate on delicate grounds. Ann knew that she was a poor cook, but

since the advent of Nora it made no difference and, moreover, it had nothing to do with the point at issue. She wanted to bring home to Peter the enormity of his breach of faith, and here he was, discussing her culinary ability. She was assured of the righteousness of her indignation, but somehow she had been, by a reference to shortcomings of her own, deflected from it. All at once Peter seemed to her to be extraordinarily baffling. She would not stand conjugally talking with him as if nothing had happened, so she turned precipitately and stalked from the room.

Nora had undressed little Hendricks, and his mother took him with mechanical tenderness, but as she sat there, rocking back and forth with him, her mind was entirely occupied with Peter's offense. There was a faint chill in the bedroom, and this added to her sense of being ill-used. When she had tucked her son into his crib, she flung herself, fully dressed, across the bed. Presently she began to cry, miserably.

After a while Peter came into the dusky room, with a burst of warmth and light. "What are you doing here in the dark?" he demanded, exactly as though nothing had happened, and this ignoring of her grief added to its intensity. Ann's stifled sobs suddenly burst noisily out.

Peter was concerned. He sat on the edge of the bed and pulled her over to him. He kissed the back of her neck, and smoothed her hair with tender, roughened fingers. Gradually, in spite of her bitterness, his mere affection comforted her, and her tears stopped. "What is it?" Peter insisted. "What are you crying about?"

"You." Ann could feel his recoil. "And that Northwestern contract!" It sounded ridiculous to her as she said it, and yet she was certain of the justice of her indignation.

Peter made no effort to argue the point, but continued to pet her like a child, until she lay, relaxed, in

his arms. In spite of her legitimate hurt, she could not resist his sweetness.

"I know what is the matter with you," he announced, at length, unconscious of the fact that he had hit upon the eternal masculine explanation of all feminine protests. "You are tired out! I'll have Nora bring your supper to you in bed. You'll be all right in the morning." With this comfortable solution he leaned over and kissed her, and Ann was silent, for, after all, what was the use of speech?

Instead she lay thinking. . . . She wished that she had something which she might conceal from Peter,—but she wasn't certain that she could do that, even had her life contained it. . . . She ate rather a large supper from the tray Nora brought, notwithstanding her resentment. . . . It was not long before her husband came in, but she knew that he would assume everything to be as usual, so she pretended to sleep, and he tiptoed about the room in a clumsy effort to undress quietly which touched her, in spite of herself. When he got into bed beside her, she still did not move nor speak, and before long she could tell by Peter's regular breathing that he slept. It was the first time in their married life that they had not, like children, kissed each other good night.

CHAPTER VI

PROPINQUITY

DANIEL LUNT first came to Chicago one day when a cold wind off the lake was sweeping the city: he thought that he had never seen so dreary a place, and, shivering miserably, he determined to find accommodations as far removed as possible from the water-front. After some melancholy search, he settled in a boarding-house on the west side of town. It was there that he found Susanna.

A year later he remembered vividly his first glimpse of her. She had walked home from work, and was all of a sparkle from buffeting the cold wind. He thought that she was one of the prettiest girls he had ever seen, and when she came into the room he was immediately aware that she was conscious of his presence. He could not have said why he was so sure of this, for certainly she was demure enough, and she barely glanced at him when they were introduced. He thought her shyness charming.

She gave him the ordinary Chicago salutation of the day. "Where have you come from?"

"New Hampshire."

"That is down east, isn't it? In New England? I don't know much about that part of the country. Have you come to Chicago to stay?"

Lunt sighed. "I suspect so. I am told there is a good chance here for a lawyer."

"A lawyer!" The pretty creature was obviously impressed. "Well!"

"I am glad you feel that way about my profession."

"Oh, I've been brought up to respect lawyers!" She laughed, teasingly, and Lunt saw that she had the slightest suspicion of a dimple near one corner of her mouth. She was extraordinarily pretty. He thought that she would compare very favorably with girls he had seen even in Boston, although her type was different. The reticent young man preferred it to that of the more perfectly poised young women of New England. He wondered if this was what he had heard spoken of as "western."

She introduced him to her mother. "This is Mr. Lunt," she said airily. "He is from New Hampshire, and he is a lawyer, and he has been to college. I dare say Mrs. Brown will put up the prices of her rooms if he stays on here!"

Mrs. Wilcox smiled nervously, and shook hands with Lunt with the greatest deference. "Susanna always jokes," she told him, half proud, half plaintive.

After a lonely time in the beginning, the young lawyer naturally made friends with the members of his profession. They made him welcome, and he found two or three other Dartmouth College men in town, who were glad to have him join them. He had been in Chicago only a few months when he found himself involved in a social life vastly more pleasant and expensive than any he had known elsewhere.

These new friends lived, for the most part, on the north side of the river, in a district still sufficiently rural to have retained something of a village quality. Lawns and shade trees surrounded the wooden houses: every one there had a vegetable garden; every one kept a cow, and neighborhood life was as intimate as it had been in the New England towns the majority of these people had left behind them.

"I can't think why you don't move over here!" his hostesses used to say to him wonderingly.

"It is pure inertia," he would reply, and he liked to believe that this was the truth. He never admitted to himself that Susanna's presence had anything to do with his continued stay in the house where he had first found refuge, but certainly there was little else to recommend it, and when the girl's inheritance came, and the two women opened their modest lodgings, he aroused himself sufficiently to move into their best bedroom. He was persuaded, however, that the arrangement was only temporary, and that he intended to leave when his friends should be on their feet. He was bored there, and the Wilcox table conversation made him welcome anything which took him away from it, yet, at the moment of escape he was always reluctant to leave Susanna behind him, abandoned to her environment. There was something in the way she looked at him as he took his departure which invariably touched him, and made him feel unreasonably guilty, as he went off to enjoy more congenial company.

When the young lawyer had been in Chicago for something over a year, he was invited to join the Garden City Literary Association, where once a fortnight scholarly papers were read by fellow-members. He was delighted to be included, and looked forward to his first meeting with considerable enthusiasm.

He set forth after his simple Wilcox tea, which had been enlivened by the amiable druggist's business reminiscences and bombastic tales of Jefferson's first day's prowess in the shop. Lunt had scarcely spoken. He had been plunged in depression. Even Susanna seemed commonplace, as she listened, enthralled, like a commercial Desdemona, to the two boastful males, and Mrs. Wilcox, who had sat sunk in silence, and made no attempt to listen, rasped his nerves less.

Later in the evening, as he sat listening to the

mellifluous sentences of the essayist, who was reading personal reminiscences of a visit to Brook Farm, he glanced contentedly about him. He felt extraordinarily soothed and happy: something in him which was both sensuous and fastidious responded to the appeal of the sophisticated room in which he found himself. Books on black walnut shelves lined the walls from the floor to the high ceiling: over the narrow black marble mantel hung a delightful Healy portrait of the wife of his host, painted in frank evening dress not often seen in Puritan Chicago. Early spring flowers were on the rosewood center table, and the crystal chandelier above them was brilliantly lighted behind its frosted globes. A square piano stood in one corner, strewn with music; behind it the long window was open, so that a breeze from the side yard, bringing into the library the scent of growing things, fluttered the white curtains. It was a charming room, furnished with sentiment and taste. . . . He found himself wishing that Susanna might see it. . . . He pulled himself up, and began to listen to the paper again, but in spite of his efforts, the girl hovered in the background of his mind.

He did better later on, when the men stood about discussing the need of withdrawal from the world in order to do one's best work. He was, at this period of his life, considerably under the influence of Mr. Emerson, and he argued, ardently, that the Brook Farm experiment had been both sensible and successful. . . . He left in the pleasantly stimulated mental condition following the consciousness of having talked well, and continued the argument with one of the members who lived at a hotel in the city. They walked through the dark silent streets together, and across the sylvan river, which shone wanly in the light of a high round moon. He liked to talk, and he thoroughly enjoyed masculine companionship. When he left his friend he told him that life in a monastery was prob-

ably the ideal one,—better, no doubt, for intellectual processes, even than Brook Farm.

He walked home, turning over in his mind arguments which he wished he had used to drive his points home. . . . He was so occupied with them that he never once thought of Susanna.

2

It was late when he arrived at the Wilcox house, and he craftily inserted his key in the lock, taking great care to make no noise. He could see, through the ground glass in the door, that a light was still burning in the parlor, and he wondered at this extravagance. He went in to turn it out before going to bed, and there, to his amazement, was Susanna. She was engaged in sewing, and sat close to the single lamp, which made a pool of light about her, and left the rest of the room in shadow. She lifted a startled face at his entrance.

"Well," he said, "you're late."

She smiled, a bit ruefully. "So are you. . . . I had to finish these ruffles. I have to have a dress." She sighed. "There's so much to do, daytimes."

Lunt had never seen her in this mood before; ordinarily she was more valiant. Pity for her softened him dangerously, and he sat down, across the narrow table. "It doesn't make any difference what you wear, to me," he said gently.

The girl flashed a look at him. "I hope it does," she murmured seriously, as she dropped her eyes to her work.

Daniel felt the need to elucidate. "I like you in anything," he said impulsively.

A suggestion of her every-day raillery animated Susanna. "Wait until you see me in this!" she warned him.

Suddenly Lunt recalled the Healy portrait he had

seen that evening, taken in a low cut, sleeveless dress. . . . He wished that he might see Susanna so tricked out. . . . The little patch of throat above her collar was very white. . . . He turned his eyes, reluctantly, to her wrists; they were slender, and he could see the blue veins under the thin skin of the right one, as the girl lifted it into the bright lamplight, in the regular gesture of sewing. Her face, bent over her work, was beautifully grave and intent. . . . He watched it for some time, unconscious of his silence, until at last she looked up, in smiling protest. He couldn't smile back at her; somehow he felt deadly serious.

"It was horrid at supper, wasn't it?" Susanna demanded.

Lunt was startled; it had not occurred to him that she, too, had found the commonplace hour tiresome. "Peterson is rather a bore," he conceded carelessly.

"Yes. . . . He's going away."

"You mean—he's given up his room!" It occurred to Lunt that this postponed his own departure,—they couldn't, both of them, leave the women in the lurch.

The girl nodded, and a faint flush came into her face. "You see,—he has been—interested—in me, for quite a long time. To-night he asked me to marry him."

Lunt pushed his chair back, revolted. The thought that she had undoubtedly sat in that very room, an hour or so ago, and allowed Peterson, that being of inferior clay, to make love to her, broke the spell which had held him. "Why didn't you say yes?" he inquired harshly.

Susanna flung a look at him which she meant to be indignant, but in the brief glimpse he had of her eyes, Lunt thought that there were tears in them. . . . Suddenly he felt a brute. . . . How could she prevent men falling in love with her? Indeed, how could they help it? He drew his chair up again, and without any

previous intention, reached across the narrow table, and covered one of the girl's busy hands with his own. She dropped her sewing, perforce, and lifted startled eyes to his. She tried to free herself from his grasp, but there was, he divined, reluctance in her gesture, and he continued to hold her. After a moment she let her hand rest, but her eyes clung to his, questioningly. . . . He knew that he should say something to reassure her, but he did not want to think; he only wanted to feel.

Presently she drew her hand away with enough decision to overawe him, and again took up her sewing. The silence between them seemed to Lunt fairly to palpitate, but he could not bring himself to break it. He watched her hands, earnestly, and under his look the skilful small things became clumsy. She dropped her spool of thread. Together, they tried to recover it, but a dark curl brushed his cheek as Susanna bent down, and he drew back, startled. His hand touched hers as she retrieved the spool, and he managed to retain his hold when she was in her chair again, blushing and delightfully confused. . . . He had forgotten all about his recent brief in favor of monastic life. Nothing seemed to him important save the wild tumult of his blood.

He was vaguely conscious that time was passing, but he was genuinely startled when Susanna said, "It's fearfully late. . . . Mama would be furious if she woke up, and found us here."

Daniel released her hand, at that. The reminder of Mrs. Wilcox's reactions destroyed his absorption in his own. Susanna began to put up her work, folding it with slow, languorous motions unlike her usual bird-like quickness. She wouldn't look at him, no matter how steadily his eyes wooed hers. She stood up, and as he got to his feet, Lunt trembled. He wanted infernally to kiss her.

"You put the lamp out," she said.

Lunt leaned over the table, and blew down the chimney; the light went out with the suddenness of a calamity. It was extraordinarily dark for an instant; the charred red end of the wick, glowing angrily in the gloom, only emphasized it. . . . The room was filled with the odor of hot oil. He moved quickly toward the door. Out in the hall a faint light filtered down from the upper floor; he could see a vague moving shape against it, and putting out his hand, he touched Susanna. He could hear her gasp in the dark.

"Good night," he said unsteadily, and pulled her to him. Her soft, yielding little figure came suddenly up against his. He bent over her, and his lips touched her hair; that was soft, too, and a faint sweet odor came from it. "Please," he begged, and she lifted her face. His lips brushed her forehead and her cheek, but at her first movement of withdrawal he freed her, scrupulously. He found himself breathing so quickly that he could scarcely speak. "Don't go."

"I must," Susanna whispered, and slipped past him into the hall. "It's awfully late."

Daniel was certain that there must be some magic word which would detain her longer, but he couldn't hit on it. He, who showed great promise in special pleading, had no eloquence at his command for what he now felt was a supreme need. . . . He thought that she expected him to say something, as she paused for the most fleeting instant on the lower step, but he, unseen in the dark, could only shake his head at her, and smile helplessly while she ran lightly up ahead of him, without further words. Her room was on the third floor; she was out of sight when he had reached the upper hall, but he could hear the swish of her wide skirts against the wall, and the soft sound of the careful closing of her door.

Lunt went into his room, which was lighted by a

great patch of moonlight coming through the window facing west. He felt his way over it; the moon rode triumphantly in a clear unmoved sky. She looked at him ironically, Daniel thought, through the tumult of his sensations.

CHAPTER VII

THE END

Until the episode of the Northwestern contract, all disagreements between Ann and Peter had been as stormily reconciled as they had been waged, but on the morning following Jefferson's revelation, the two got up, dressed, ate their breakfast, and went about their business without so much as a mention of it. Ann had been more gravely silent than usual, and Peter a shade more jauntily casual, but there had been nothing in their manner sufficiently unusual to arouse the suspicion of even that sleuth upon their hearth, Nora.

Ann had expected that in the morning her husband's sense of fair play would reassert itself, and that he would make an acknowledgment of his fault. When he went off without speaking, she was certain that at night he would do so. She planned generous things to say in response, and with this imagined nobility she regained some cheerfulness.

Peter came in late; he was dirty, taciturn and tired. "I'll clean up," he said, by way of greeting.

At supper he ate a considerable portion of his chicken hash and potatoes before he spoke at all; then he looked up with a sigh of relief. "I was hungry," he told Ann. "This tastes good." He applied himself again, with evident contentment.

Silence hung over the table, and Nora lingered suspiciously when she came into the room, darting sharp glances from her master to her mistress. Presently Peter said, "I shouldn't be surprised to see our troops capture Lee any time now."

Ann stared at him. Could he think she would join him in a pretense that nothing had happened? She caught Nora's curious eye, and found herself saying hastily, with false amiability, "I hope so."

"I thought this morning it would rain," Peter offered, next.

Silence.

"I'm sorry I came back too late to see the baby."

Silence.

"Have you seen Susanna Wilcox to-day?"

"No."

"Jeff says her mother makes him very comfortable."

Silence for some time.

"Well, I've had a good supper." Peter pushed his chair back, replete. "I'll take a look at the paper."

He went into the parlor, and established himself near the lamp. In a few moments he began to read aloud the latest news of the pursuit of General Lee. "By gum! This time I believe they'll get him!" he interrupted himself to say, from time to time. He seemed to be completely absorbed.

Ann was possessed by a sort of terror. Would Peter win, then, in his struggle to ignore the situation between them? Was it possible that so serious a dereliction could be overlaid by the ordinary happenings of daily life? She hoped not, passionately, but she was too deeply hurt to make advances herself, and incredible as it seemed to her, the evening passed, the week passed, and Peter's delinquency was not again referred to by either of them. He was glad enough to let it alone, and she could not bring herself to mention it. If she had been of rougher fiber, she might have shouldered through the situation and won back her original understanding with him, but the fact that she divined his relief at being rid of the burden of confidences stopped her dead. The matter was closed, miserably.

Notwithstanding her lack of touch, she could see that the new business was of much greater importance than the old. She was accustomed to merciless bursts of effort on Peter's part, but she had never before seen him work so hard. In spite of the fact that such a thing was practically unheard of, he hired two shifts of men and ran his plant continuously. Although Ann did not know it, this impressed the industrial world and did much to establish the young iron man as an invincible fellow.

Jeff, however, complained bitterly. "If Pete can't get that contract out on time in regular working hours, he never should have signed it."

"If he hadn't, you wouldn't have had anything to do," Ann commented sharply. Whatever she might think of him herself, she could not bear to have any one else criticize Peter adversely.

"He won't get under the wire anyhow. I believe the railroad buyer is trying to ruin him."

Ruin him? . . . Ruin—Peter? A primitive rage arose in Ann. "No one can ruin Peter," she declared gamely. She believed that. It was not possible for her to think that he could fail, no matter what persons or circumstances combined against him.

He took the management of the difficult night shift in the beginning, and Ann found the evenings interminable. She read, and sewed, and thought,—thought miserably. . . . Finally she went to bed, lonely and heavy-hearted. . . . Sounds awoke her in the night. . . . The cottage developed new and strange creaks. . . . She couldn't go to sleep again at once, and lay fruitlessly wondering how she had lost Peter's confidence, and thinking dire thoughts of matrimony. It was, unreasonably, the institution rather than her husband which she condemned.

At six o'clock in the morning Peter would burst into the house, dirty, tired and reticent. He was en-

tirely masculine. He was engulfed in his work. Not even a bubble rose from him to the surface of family life.

He accepted the new relationship with extraordinary ease, and almost at once he lost all sense of being at fault. He was running true to type, at last. He could bury his work in some secret place, as a dog does a bone, and keep it for his own enjoyment. . . . He could think about it constructively, and not be thrown off the rails by an inept question. He had no explanations to make, when no one knew what to ask him about.

Peter did not need Jeff to tell him that he had taken a chance on the Northwestern contract: he had known that before he signed it. After one glance at the buyer's grinning face, he saw that the man was counting upon one of two things: he either expected a refusal to sign, in which case he could report adversely on the new firm, or he expected Peter to take on the work, and fail. Either way, he anticipated smashing the Smith and Jefferson Company, and very likely later on he hoped to give the contract to some plant in which he had an interest. Peter had smiled secretly as he wrote his name on the dotted line at the end of the page; it amused him to have this brash young man think him a fool. He wasn't. He signed because he knew this to be his one hope of success. He couldn't go on forever carrying a plant and a pay-roll, and waiting for the perfect opportunity. This might smash him, but he was ruined either way, and if he fulfilled the contract he was assured of success. He folded the papers, and handed one copy back. He was a hard man to smash.

2

The news of General Lee's surrender reached Chicago late in the evening. Peter was at work and Ann

was deep in *Henry Esmond* when the sound of the court-house bell came sweetly across the city to her. It could mean but one thing! She rushed out to the front porch in time to see a rocket cut the velvet blackness of the night, and tear a fiery streak across the sky. It was followed by another. . . . And another. . . . A great clamor of church bells suddenly burst out, urgent and brazen.

Titus Jefferson rushed out of the Wilcox house, and came leaping across the street. "I'm going to see if it's so," he called to Ann. "Want to come with me?"

Of course she wanted to, and in a moment she was hurrying down the street, trying vainly to keep step with her companion's long strides. A wild exhilaration possessed her.

Ahead of them the city glowed with bonfires, and as they looked another rocket flashed up into the high vault of the night. They gasped as the swift thing broke, scattering stars. "Pretty, isn't it?" Titus said. He looked approvingly at Ann, whose eyes followed the floating fire, entranced.

"What a pity Peter is missing it!"

"Ye-ah," Jefferson rejoined, and took a fresh grasp of Ann's arm. He was glad that his partner was at work, but he decided, discreetly, not to mention it. "They haven't been married long enough," he thought, grinning cynically in the dark.

On the four corners of the court-house square bonfires fed with tar barrels were leaping up into the night: the flames sprang high, illuminating, with a fierce and tawny flood, faces in the gathering crowds. . . . From the balcony of a near-by hotel rockets continued to ascend, with a tearing sound of soaring.

Singers had been rushed from some church service and assembled on the court-house steps. As Titus and Ann came up they began to sing Miriam's Hymn.

"Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously;
The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea!"

It was magnificently impressive: never again would those *bassos* vibrate on naked human heartstrings as they did that night. They sang the hymn over and over again, until hundreds joined with them in a great volume of sound.

When it was over Ann found herself in tears, and Titus was greatly distressed. "Don't cry," he begged, leaning down until his face was almost against hers. "I just naturally can't bear it!"

She laughed shakily, and in a moment she was wildly gay. Her companion followed her mood as fortunately as a perfect accompanist does the interpretation of a singer. She had not dreamed that he could be so sympathetic.

On the outskirts of the throng boys with tin horns began to parade. The night was like a bright inferno.

At midnight the light artillery at Camp Douglas fired a salute of one hundred guns. As the first shattering salvo dominated the city, the vociferous crowd hushed. It seemed a long time, while the deliberate reports boomed out. The crowd counted them, audibly; beside Ann a man and his wife quarreled acrimoniously as to the number. . . . After the final report there was a deep long silence, and then every one cheered, irrepressibly.

"We must go home," Ann murmured, but as she spoke the choir began to sing *Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow,* and she, who ordinarily took her religion sedately, found herself joining in with all the fervor of her spirit. . . . Beside her Jefferson shouted the words, hopelessly out of tune.

3

As they swung across the bridge toward home, Titus had an inspiration. "Let's look Pete up at the plant."

Ann hesitated. "Won't we disturb him?" she asked, weakly. She had never seen the new furnaces in action, and she wanted enormously to go.

"Disturb Peter? At work? Don't you worry! But we'd better hurry. It must be about time to see them draw a heat."

They ran down the empty sidewalk, their feet making a staccato drumming on the hollow boards. . . . A man at the mill gate would have stopped them, had he not recognized Titus. Ann's haughty "I am Mrs. Smith" would have got her nowhere: this was a man's world. They hurried in through a mean little front office, out through an open yard where piles of pig-iron loomed huge in the dark, and into the main building itself. At the door Ann stopped, and gasped. The place seemed vast, in the tricky light of blowing gas-jets. Over her head she was aware of high arches,—unilluminated and eerie. Facing her across the open building was a row of red, wide-open mouths. Men moved mysteriously before them; Ann had a sudden startling glimpse of a naked torso outlined in black against a glare of orange light, and she thought of red Indians.

"We're just in time," Jeff said, and urged her on. Stumbling over things in the gloom, they went very close to the furnaces. They had little relation to the domestic, cellar variety with which Ann was familiar.

Jeff pointed to the men. "Puddlers," he told her. "Brutes, aren't they?"

Ann wondered at them as they stood before the doors, regardless of the fierce heat which streamed over them. They stirred molten stuff in the furnaces with long iron pokers, and their bodies, shining with sweat, tapered to slim waist-lines: great muscles sprang into life in their vast shoulders, as they stirred. . . . Something pagan in Ann told her that they were beautiful. The man nearest her, feeling her gaze, turned and

grinned at her, but in an instant he was back at his work.

"Look through the door," Jeff told her. "See it boil!"

She could, after her eyes became accustomed to the dazzle; the iron actually boiled as placidly as milk on her own stove, at home. . . . She drew back and became conscious of other men in the darkness beside the furnaces. . . . They were, for the most part, smoking short black pipes, and their eyes were fixed steadily on her, across the glowing bowls. . . . Presently they came forward, and relieved the men at the doors, who surrendered their pokers phlegmatically, and brought pails of beer from the shadows. They drank deeply, and with gusto.

"Look," Jeff said, indicating the nearest puddler. "He's separating it into balls."

Ann looked, eagerly. The man was working his fiery mess into great lumps of plastic material; he pushed back the iron shield which had somewhat sheltered him, and the heat engulfed him, mercilessly. He muddled his roughly shaped ball of iron to the door of the furnace and seized hold of it with a pair of huge tongs which lay beside him. The thing came forth pasty metal, and dumping it on a two-wheeled cart, he ran off with it.

Ann and Jeff were blindly following him past an inferno of open furnaces, when Peter saw them. Shouting an amazed greeting, he joined them. Suddenly the air was rent with a series of explosions,—staccato and terrifying. Ann clung to her husband's arm. "What is it?" she shouted, above the din.

The two men laughed at her panic. "It's the Crocodile Squeezer," Peter explained, unavailingly.

Ahead of them a machine bulked big in the half-light. A puddler ran up to it with his ductile iron ball, and the upper half of the thing rose majestically to

receive it: Ann saw that it was indeed like a monstrous mouth. The jaws closed, and a series of explosions rent the air. It was like a battle, Ann thought, cowering. A shower of sparks fell all around her, and gleaming streams of slag poured to the ground.

Seeing something which needed his attention, Peter left Ann with Jeff again: she could see him giving positive directions to a group of workmen. This was a new Peter,—dynamic and forceful. Titus was telling her about a mysterious process called welding. It was entirely incomprehensible to her. Even looking at it, she couldn't understand it. . . . She hoped Peter would never know how thoroughly at sea she was, and she wondered, with a sudden humility, why she should expect him to consult with her about this wild world he ruled.

Finding herself face to face with a new and different row of furnaces, she leaned obediently to look into an open door. It was at first only a red glare which dazzled her eyes as the sun dazzles.

"Keep on looking, lady," the sweating forgeman advised her.

She squinted her eyes against the intolerable heat, and gradually the reddish color faded. Vague shapes began to take form in the aperture. She winked, and all at once she could see. The whole interior of the oven was like a design in frost, pure white and soft of outline; bundles of flat iron bars were lying on the floor; they were more like ice than anything else. In spite of the great heat, Ann could not bring herself to believe that it was white-hot metal she was looking at, fascinated. The forgeman poked an iron rod into the furnace and turned over the bundles, one by one. They spit a few sparks, then, and gases burned palely about them. The heat was terrific. She glanced up at the forgeman. Deep lines were graven on his face. She

looked back into the furnace to find that all her power of seeing was gone; it was red and opaque again.

The rolls were more comprehensible: a child could have understood that the metal was taking the shape of a rail as it went through the machine. . . . In a few moments the finished product lay before her, cooling on a rack, with Peter beaming over it. He was like a little boy. His pride touched her, unexpectedly.

Outside, the men were standing about the gate, cooling off between heats; some of them came up with pails of fresh beer from the corner saloon, noisy in the quiet night.

"They've had a 'Cat-and-a-Mouse,'" Jeff said. "Whisky with a beer chaser. They're a tough lot."

"We need 'em tough," Peter commented grimly, and when Ann and Titus started, he strolled over to where the men stood. His wife caught a new tone in his voice as he spoke to them: she had never heard that note of kindly authority before.

"Pete's a wonder," Titus said admiringly. "The men would go through Hades for him. . . . He gives 'em hell when they make mistakes,—but they get credit when they deserve it. He'd have made a good officer."

Ann nodded, proudly. Her resentment was all burned away in the flame of Peter's furnaces.

CHAPTER VIII

A CHRISTENING

As HIS stack of rerolled rails increased it became evident to Peter that he would win the necessary bonus for early delivery, and his tension relaxed. He was genial again, and affectionate. He made much of his wife and baby, and he praised Nora's cooking so that she bridled with pleasure. The whole atmosphere of his home was changed.

In his affable reaction to success, he volunteered agreement with Ann's choice of a name for his son. "Hendricks Cortlandt is all right with me," he said. "Old Baker thinks well of it, too. You'd better make him godfather."

Susanna was to be godmother; she was greatly pleased with the idea, and quite ready to renounce the devil and all his works, in the baby's name.

Mr. Cortlandt came to Chicago for the christening, and Ann was dismayed to see how much older he had grown. His figure had taken on a look of emaciation; his eyes, under his bushy white brows, were sunken, and when he relaxed he shook a trifle. As she ran to meet him, Ann caught a whiff of the bay rum with which he invariably scented his handkerchief; the odor carried her back to her childhood, and her eyes filled with sudden tears. The old man kissed her cheek. It was the restrained, inhibited kiss of a man who all his life had been reticent with women. He shook Peter's hand

stiffly. He had come, but he could not forget that Ann's husband was an outlander.

The baby, magnificent in a christening robe two yards long, lavishly trimmed in puckers and lace, was eminently satisfactory. He was chubby as a baby should be, and in his gorgeous clothes his fat neck and arms were bare. With exaggerated care, Mr. Cortlandt touched one mottled forearm. "I never knew you when you were so small," he said to Ann wistfully.

Mr. Baker's carriage took the little party to the neighboring church. The banker was resplendent in a blue swallow-tail coat, with a red pink in his buttonhole. He looked almost too dashing to be a godfather. His decorous wife was dressed in her "plum," with a great concession to the gaiety of the occasion, as ordinarily she wore only black silk. Even the "plum" was tied to earth by ruffles of black lace at the throat and wrists, and with it she wore a pork-pie hat with a cascade of black in the rear. She looked extraordinarily respectable. She was as respectable even as Queen Victoria, but no one would have thought of mentioning that, because of the strained relations existing between the United States and England.

Daniel Lunt was out of town, but Titus had, with the greatest enthusiasm, accepted an invitation to the christening. As he was late, however, and as Ann disliked to keep the minister waiting, they started off without him. Little Hendricks was wrapped in shawls and borne out to the carriage. He had never sat in such confined state before, and when they started off he roared with fear. The ladies all drove, while the gentlemen walked, followed at a respectful distance by Nora.

Notwithstanding Ann's efforts the minister was waiting, but he did not seem irritated; even his wife was smiling. The baby was unwrapped from his cocoon, and appeased. Once more he was admired. . . .

Somehow it was not at all like a religious service: it was much more human. Not until the party approached the font did solemnity seize them. Peter carried the baby, and Ann put her arm through Mr. Cortlandt's. She was very proud, but tremulous.

These appropriate sensations were quickly shattered, however, for little Hendricks did not care for proceedings in which he was so mysteriously and so uncomfortably important. Even in his father's arms his eyes were round and his mouth drooped, and when the white-robed minister took him it was more than he could bear. He strained away from him with all his baby strength, but for a time he maintained a trembling upper lip. When the water dribbled over him, however,—cold, disagreeable water unlike anything he had ever known,—he exploded into howls of angry protest. They rang through the church menacingly, disgracing his parents. . . . In a moment it was over, and his mother snatched him. In her arms he became calm and benignant. He grinned again, a wide, toothless grin, and waved aimless arms. The minister's wife made the clucking sounds at him with which she met the emergency of baptisms, and they all walked down the aisle, bound by a common feeling of having been through a crisis together.

When they came out on the steps, Ann could see Nora, who had lurked in the background, scudding down the street. She frowned, fearing for the tea biscuits. The ladies crowded into the carriage, adding the minister's wife to their number; there was some laughter and much good feeling as they started off. Nora was not in sight as they approached the cottage; in answer to an imperious jangling of the door-bell she appeared, breathless, but with a white apron tied over her best wool plaid. By the time the gentlemen had joined them everything was ready: the table was furnished with Ann's white and gold set; the chicken salad

was delicious, the tea biscuits a triumph. Peter produced port, and the baby's health was drunk, solemnly.

Just after that rite, Titus Jefferson burst into the house, contrite, and full of specious explanations. It became necessary to drink the baby's health all over again, the minister a trifle self-consciously. Titus came bearing gifts; he had bought a fur cap for little Hendricks; it was made of coonskin, and was much too large, but the donor was unabashed. "He'll grow to it by winter," he said happily.

Presents being in order, the banker produced a silver mug with a handle on one side. Ann was delighted; with it in her hand she could foresee a long and enchanting future. . . . Her son holding it in both chubby fists, while still a mere baby. . . . His first absurd efforts to grasp it properly. . . . A competent, red-cheeked schoolboy, tossing off a cup of milk before going to school. . . . Her gray eyes shone with pleasure.

Susanna had quilted a cover for the perambulator and Nora had strung some spools on a string; her present pleased the baby the best of all.

Only Mr. Cortlandt had made no contribution to the occasion, and now he said, magnificently, that he would deposit ten thousand dollars to his namesake's account, to be held in trust for him until he became of age.

Ten thousand dollars! Peter was staggered. That was more money than he had himself. . . . But why in trust? . . . Did the old man think he would spend it?

"I've made you trustee, my boy," Mr. Cortlandt added, putting a trembling hand on Peter's shoulder.

The younger man was ashamed of himself. It added quite a savor to his triumph to have old Baker standing there, beaming at him. "You're very generous, sir," he said lamely.

CHAPTER IX

STRAWS

On the Sunday following the christening Mrs. Baker asked the young Smiths to supper, and Peter felt that it was important for them to make as good an impression on the banker as they might. He urged Ann to buy a new dress for the occasion, but she had insisted that an old one would do when furnished up with a new lace frill, and he had been glum about it going over on the street-car. He had been afraid that she would not do him credit, but she entirely outshone the dressy, middle-aged wife of a broker who, with her husband, had been invited to meet them.

Seated at the banker's damask-covered table, Peter marveled at the number of things his wife seemed to be able to talk about. He was himself limited to those things about which he knew something, but Ann's flow covered a large and unexplored field. It made him nervous to hear her discuss things about which he knew she knew nothing, but he could see that the two other men were delighted with her and he could not help being proud of her. She seemed to him an entirely different person from the woman he saw every day: she had put on brilliancy as one puts on a garment.

From Ann he looked at Mrs. Baker, and was struck by the variety of pins and chains she wore on her decorous black silk bosom, and the number of rings

which covered her plump white fingers. He glanced from them to the broker's wife. She wore several diamonds set in black enamel, but Ann's slim hands were bare except for the wide gold band of her wedding ring, and the contrast humiliated Peter. His jaw set stubbornly over his escalloped oysters, as he determined that she, too, should have jewels.

The men talked business with their cigars, and on this safe ground Peter won back his self-sufficiency. Mr. Baker and his friend Stephens led the young man on, and he spoke more freely than he often did.

"One of these days," he said, "I'll have a furnace and make my own pig. There isn't enough in rails alone."

"Have you ever thought of incorporating?" the broker shot at him suddenly.

Peter met his eyes with his sudden unexpected smile. "Often."

"That seems a sensible idea, Smith," Mr. Baker said. "Why didn't you do it in the first place?"

"I hadn't the acquaintance, sir."

"I should think now that you have a going concern it might be arranged," Stephens said thoughtfully.

"That's what I've been hoping."

Mr. Baker sat for a moment drumming on the edge of the table with his fingers. "It happens that just at this time I know of money looking for investment," he admitted. "Bring your books to my office in the morning, Smith: Stephens and I will go over them. I'll be glad to give you any help I can. I believe in young men, you know. It is boys like you who will give Chicago a future."

The sound of a piano interrupted them, and Mr. Baker rose. "Does your wife play?" he inquired of Peter.

Peter stood up, too, and following the other men's example, he ground his cigar against his plate. "Yes,"

he said. He couldn't to save his life say anything more, for, although he had been married to her for eighteen months, he had never before heard Ann play. He had never thought of her as playing; it had not even occurred to him to buy her a piano, and he had a flash of wonder if she had wanted one all this time. His face hardened. That was another thing he must attend to.

When the men came into the parlor Ann rose from the piano stool.

"Nonsense!" the banker protested. "I beg you to continue." He took her slim arm in a parental clasp, and rather than stand inanely linked to him in the middle of the room, she returned unwillingly, amid a little flutter of urging on the part of the two other ladies.

"I am afraid I have forgotten everything I ever knew," she said, smiling and amazingly at her ease as she sat down again, and ran her fingers over the piano. "I used to play a piece called *The Alpine Horn, with Variations.*"

Peter was much more nervous than she, as she blundered in a false start, and when she finally sailed away through the intricacies of the composition, he was inflated with pride in her.

She was firm in her refusal to try anything else. "The miracle has happened," she declared. "I could not think of tempting Providence again."

"Do you sing, my dear?" Mrs. Baker inquired.

"I used to." With one finger she tentatively picked out the air of a song. "I might try this, I suppose."

Her hostess sat bolt upright in her rocker. "Mr. Baker! It is *Rosalie the Prairie Flower,*" she cried ecstatically.

Reassured by such simplicity, Ann began to sing. Her voice was not big, and no performance could have

been less professional, but she was charming as she sat there singing, and Peter found it curiously upsetting.

Mr. Baker applauded her vociferously, and after that it became known that Stephens had a bass voice. There followed a great searching for music which finally resulted in Ann and the broker singing that tragic piece of the period, *Lily Dale,* and after that, it being Sunday, they all sang hymns. The entire evening revolved around Ann; there was no question but that she scored a tremendous success.

2

On the day the railroad made its first payment, Peter went over to the shops in Washington Street, in search of a diamond ring for his wife. He was somewhat startled at the prices asked, and to cover his embarrassment he laughed confidentially with the clerk at the ridiculousness of woman's desires. . . . The stone he finally selected was smaller than he could have wished, but he felt well satisfied when it was in his pocket. He gave it to Ann after supper, as they sat beside the lamp in the parlor, lost in one of their conjugal silences. He pushed the box across to her and said, "I bought you a present to-day."

Ann took the little velvet cube wonderingly. It was obviously made to contain a ring, and yet she was conscious of no feeling but surprise when she opened it. "For me?" she inquired, with wide eyes.

Peter nodded. "I didn't give you an engagement ring," he said gruffly. "I always meant to buy you one when I could afford it."

"But can you afford it now?" Ann asked incautiously.

There you had it, Peter reflected. It had been a mistake to mention finances. "I got some money to-day," he admitted grudgingly. There was a little

silence, after this rebuff, but while the atmosphere did not seem exactly suited for sentiment, Peter persisted. "Put it on, why don't you?"

Ann looked at him with startled eyes for a moment, and then she gulped, quite openly. "You put it on," she said unsteadily, and she stretched her hand out to him across the table,—reluctantly, Peter thought.

He took the ring, however, and going around to his wife, he slipped it on the finger which already wore his wedding ring. He looked at Ann's hand for a moment as it lay in his own. She had lovely hands, fine and slender, yet capable. He lifted the one he held to his lips. She looked at him with a veiled glance which disturbed him somewhat, but the affectionate little scene had stirred his blood, and he bent and kissed her on the lips. She did not turn her face away.

CHAPTER X

ABSENCE

THE morning following his episode with Susanna, Daniel Lunt awoke laboring under the conviction that something deplorable had happened. . . . After a moment or two of wakefulness, he knew what it was; he had kissed his landlady's pretty daughter; he had kissed the valiant, weak, appealing Susanna. He was amazed at himself; he was disgusted to realize that his passion had so over-ridden his plans,—and yet, he found himself whistling as he shaved.

He didn't know what he should do next; he somehow couldn't bear to think of that. He dreaded seeing the girl at breakfast, but when he did so, tenderness inundated him. He wanted to get her alone for a moment, to say something which should restore their commonplace relationship, but he could not so much as meet her eyes. Her white lids were lowered like a nun's; her lashes hung dark above her cheeks. She seemed to him a different being from the gay, pleasure-loving little creature he had known. His heart smote him, but he was forced to leave the house without a word with her. At the moment he regretted this excessively, but by the time he reached the corner, he was glad that he had had no opportunity to commit himself. He knew, then, only too well, what it was Susanna had expected him to say, the night before.

Marriage! He thought about it all the way over

town, a frown on his black brows. Reaction had set in: he wanted to marry because his reason and his intellect counseled it, not because he had kissed a pretty girl in the dark. . . . He had almost reached his office when a piercing recollection of Susanna's sweetness shot through his gloom. . . . After all, no one had ever so deeply stirred him, and he wondered if the ideal companionship for which he had been unsuccessfully searching were not mainly a literary idea. He felt the need of time to think it over,—to make his great decision.

A letter had been shoved through the slit in his door, and lay face down on the floor. It was from his most important client, who had, as usual,—he was a very good client indeed,—been making a fool of himself, and was frantically urging Lunt to come to his rescue. He was in Springfield, and begged Daniel to join him there at once.

The young man was extraordinarily uplifted by the idea. He was eager to leave the town, with its tawdry manifestations of spring. . . . He wanted to set his feet on an untrodden road. . . . He wanted an automatic change of thought. He plunged down-stairs to the telegraph office, and sent off a message to the effect that he would come at once. . . . There was no one in the cottage when he went for his bag, and he left a note on the table saying that he had been called out of town.

2

On the train Lunt plunged into work; he had only the one day in which to prepare for the rather complicated business he was unexpectedly engaged in, and he resolutely applied himself, but all the time, back of the stern barrier of his intellect, he was conscious of the sensuous and unnerving threat of a hovering day-dream. If his mind slipped for an instant from his

occupation, if he allowed his eyes to rest for a moment on the flying prairie, bright with spring, it all but took possession of him. This lurking absorption was frightening, and once in order to test its strength he resolutely abandoned himself to it. . . . The events of the evening before arose with startling clearness. . . . He could remember just Susanna's look, wide-eyed, and a little breathless. Closing his eyes he could almost recall his actual feeling when he kissed her. . . . He shook himself resolutely, and plunged back into his law books.

Springfield did him good. It had enough of the quality of the New Hampshire towns he had known to delight him, and he was profoundly interested in the clear impression he received of Abraham Lincoln as a resident of the place. Every one he met knew him, and had affectionate or humorous anecdotes about him to relate. It seemed to Lunt that the people in Springfield talked of nothing else: even the war was of secondary importance to "the latest about Abe Lincoln." It all was very remote from the close association in the little house on Loomis Street.

The young lawyer, secure in his possession of a rich client, stayed at the best hotel in town. The Legislature was in session, and the place was crowded with politicians. In the lobby, where jovial, thick-waisted gentlemen seemed to live and have their being,—so that he could not imagine them existing anywhere else,—Lunt had his first lesson in practical politics: the process of smoothing the way for the railroads was unfolded before his eyes. One bland gentleman, who was very active in removing obstacles, Lunt recognized as a member of his own profession, whom he had recently heard at a banquet, speaking on the Ideals of the Law. He was glad to see Lunt, and made friendly overtures to him, but the young New Englander's response was formal, for he had his own Ideals of the Law.

Instead he made friends among the young newspaper men who were reporting the doings of the Legislature, and they taught him much of their cynical philosophy. "We'll all have gold watches by the time the session is over," they told him, and when they came back from a committee meeting where a railroad purchase was discussed, with unexplained twenty-dollar gold pieces in their pockets, Lunt was forced to believe them.

3

Daniel, never a sound sleeper, was awakened early one morning by confusion in the hotel. He opened his door, and listened. "What is it?" he asked a hurrying bell boy.

"Boss, dey say Abe Lincoln am shot."

Lunt's first reaction was incredulity, which gave way to a feverish desire to know if news so bad as this could be true, and he flung on his clothes. The musty corridors were still dim as he hurried through them; he could barely see the pairs of shoes which sprawled untidily before closed doors. Here and there were two pairs, one uncouth and muddy, the other small and trim. . . . Matrimony. . . . Reduced to a shabby double room, there seemed to be little in it.

The office was already crowded by men in various stages of undress: like Lunt, they had rushed down in search of details of the tragedy. . . . There was no question but that an attempt at assassination had been made. The hotel clerk, white and seedy-looking behind his desk, and with an unlighted cigar clenched savagely in his teeth, kept saying over and over again, "Anyway, Abe isn't dead."

The telegraph office was in the station, and Lunt decided to walk over to it in search of further news. The freshness of the early morning was startling after the close air of the hotel, and his feet made a porten-

tous sound of knocking on the boards of the walk, almost indecorous in the hushed dawn. In the thin early light, the clapboard houses along the street were modestly withdrawn behind budding lilac bushes. The young man, farm bred, rejoiced in the cleanness of the new day in the country town.

The station was closed, and Daniel stood about on the platform for a few moments, irresolutely. He had no wish to go back to the hotel: more than anything else he wanted to be alone. He was a great admirer of the President, and he was crushed by a realization of the tragedy to the country, should his wound prove mortal. . . . Melancholy, never far from him, seized hold on him heavily.

Aimlessly, he crossed the tracks. Beyond him lay the open prairie. Farms had adventured out upon it, and here and there a newly plowed field showed a plushy black square in the vivid spring green. The bare trees cast long angular shadows in the early sunlight. . . . The road was deep in mud, but the young grass beside it was sweet to walk upon, and Daniel started off toward the east. The land billowed out before him, vibrant and thrillingly green; the great arch of the sky was infinite, and faintly blue. In the wayside thicket there was a constant musical clamor of birds. In spite of himself, the young man's mood lightened. He found death and the fresh vitality of the morning entirely incompatible.

After some time he came to a shallow little river, swollen by the early rains. There was a group of willows on the bank, already sufficiently in leaf to throw a soft varying shadow on the ground. The sun was hot, and Daniel was feeling the languor of the spring: he threw himself down in this light shade. . . . Stretched to the earth, he could get its hearty fruitful odor. . . . He could hear the gentle lapping of the stream. . . . He lay for some time with his face

buried in his arms: he was not thinking; he was swinging in space.

Presently a new and unidentified scent penetrated his mood; he sat upright, and sniffed. . . . In the brush behind him a wild cherry tree was in flower; one branch was thrust toward him, and Daniel broke off a tiny pungent spray. . . . Suddenly, he found himself thinking of Susanna. This sweetness was like hers, it had a tang which poignantly recalled her. . . . Deeper in the thicket wild crab was bursting its coral buds, and high above him, Lunt could see, exquisite against the spinning sky, a wide-flung branch of opened blossom. . . . Deep on each petal, where the pink yielded to white, it was no more beautiful than Susanna's cheek, where the pallor of her neck was subtly flushed with rose.

The change in his mood from hopelessness to ecstasy was glorious: it seemed to Daniel to symbolize all that Susanna would bring to him. . . . He was wildly impatient to see her. . . . He was, at last, a lover.

4

After Daniel Lunt's departure, Titus Jefferson expanded genially into being the man of the house. It amused him to look after the two women, and to give them sage masculine advice which they never questioned and he never bothered to find out if they took. One of his self-assumed duties was to act as escort to Susanna. She liked going out with him. She liked his extravagant gallantry, and the intentness of his blue gaze. She expanded in the atmosphere he created about her, which always made her feel attractive, and more than anything else, she luxuriated in his ready spending of money. With him she was always in the delightful situation of receiving gifts: almost every night he brought her a paper of candy, or a bunch of Malaga

grapes powdered with sawdust, or possibly a Valencia orange, newly arrived from Spain.

Jefferson was deeply moved by the assassination of the President, and read all the news in regard to it aloud to the two women. He railed violently against Booth, and as the days passed without his capture, he threatened to go to Washington to join in the man-hunt. He made the tragedy seem extraordinarily vivid.

On the morning the President's funeral train came to Chicago he announced that he had no intention of working, and invited Susanna to go with him to view the cortège. From a street vender he bought a huge black crêpe rosette with a picture of Abraham Lincoln in its center, and he insisted on pinning it to the girl's smooth breast. "Just over your heart," he said, "if you have one, which I am beginning to doubt."

This was the sort of raillery which Susanna was competent to meet. "You ought to know whether I have one or not," she told him, and she flashed him a glance with mischief in it.

In response, Jeff slipped his hand through her arm; she could feel the clasp of his firm fingers just above her elbow, and so conducted, she walked happily through the crowded streets, certain of her power over her companion.

From the high sidewalk, on the lake front where the cortège was to pass, she looked over a sea of heads, through which a lane was kept open by detachments of soldiers. To the east the lake stretched, blank and faintly blue; along the street the houses were draped in black, and every door-step and window was crowded with people.

Jefferson plunged through the crowd, holding Susanna's hand, and dragging her along behind him. Presently they came to an iron gate, closed on an empty front yard: he swung it open and unceremoniously shoved Susanna in. He looked up at the little group

of men and women on the steps, and laughed. "Much obliged," he said, taking his hat off with a grand gesture. The people laughed too, saw that he was accompanied by a pretty girl, and told them to stay.

After that they saw everything, although Susanna was somewhat preoccupied in slyly watching the group on the steps. "They are very stylish," she whispered to Jeff humbly.

The house behind them was lavishly decorated. Long black cambric streamers hung from the roof to the ground, and on the balcony there was a marble bust of the President. It was surrounded by a huge wreath of immortelles, held in place by plaster cherubs. From the floor of the balcony a printed sign hung: "Amelioration of Hope."

"I never saw anything so elegant," Susanna declared. "What do you think 'Amelioration' means?"

"I haven't an idea," Jeff confessed, and called her attention to the house next door. "They've got poetry."

Sure enough, a sign hung from that balcony, too, and on it was printed:

"In sorrowing grief the nation's tears are spent.
Humanity has lost a friend, and we, a President!"

"I think it is immensely literary to have poetry," Susanna said, and wondered why, without volition on her part, she should suddenly be thinking of Daniel Lunt.

The thunder of a near-by cannon recalled her to her surroundings; she jumped and clung to Jeff's arm. There was another report, followed by a great outburst of tolling bells. The funeral train had arrived.

Emotional tension suddenly stiffened the crowd, and in a few moments the sound of muffled drums sent a shiver through it. . . . Far away down the street the

sight of the approaching cortège carried to every mind a stunning realization of loss: men turned haggard faces to one another, and said, "It is finished."

Behind the dull drums of the band a full regiment of infantry, led by General Sheridan, followed the draped flag. It was composed largely of former rebels, who had been borrowed from Camp Douglas and outfitted in Union blue.

"How serious they look," Susanna whispered.

"They've lost their best friend," Titus returned, and a man passing on the walk said, loud enough to be heard by those about him, "In one hand the laurel,—in the other the olive branch. Dramatic, isn't it?"

After the military display came a long line of citizens' committees. People every one knew and unknown people walked shoulder to shoulder: the important men and the humble men of the city shared alike in the city's grief.

"Of the people, by the people and for the people," was Jefferson's comment. "I wish I was marching."

Following the citizens' committees, down the narrow lane between the crowds, the funeral car came. It was drawn by twelve black horses, and surrounded by pallbearers.

Titus was tremendously moved. Tears filled his eyes, and he wiped them away on his sleeve, entirely unembarrassed. Beside him Susanna stood, quite composed. An uncomfortable conviction possessed her that she, as a delicate female, should show some signs of grief, but she could not forget herself sufficiently to have the tragedy of the moment seize her. However, she took her pocket handkerchief, shook it out carefully, and pressed it to her eyes. Titus looked down at her, and was immediately overcome: he put his arm about her, and instinctively she clung to him for a moment. Instinctively, too, she did not look up at him, for fear he would see that she was not crying.

5

Daniel Lunt came back to Chicago late in the day of the President's funeral ceremonies. He went straight from the train to his office, where there was enough accumulation of his affairs to detain him through the evening.

When he went home, he found Mrs. Wilcox alone in the parlor, occupying herself with her boarder's mending.

"I am glad to see you back," she told him. "You didn't see Susanna, did you?"

"No."

"The President is lying in state in the court-house, and she and Mr. Jefferson went off after supper to see him. It is time that they were home, I should think."

"There is a great crowd," Lunt said. He turned to the stairs, suddenly weary.

Mrs. Wilcox arrested him. "Mrs. Smith's uncle in New York is dead."

"I am sorry to hear that."

"Well, I don't know. I expect he'll leave her a pile of money."

Daniel's room seemed very pleasant after a fortnight in a provincial hotel, and he shut the door behind him with a real sense of homecoming. The window was open a few inches, and a fresh night wind rippled the muslin curtain. He went over and sat down in the easy chair beside it. . . . It was very comfortable, and he was drowsy, after his day on the train. . . . Without in the least intending it, he fell asleep.

He was awakened, some time later, by Susanna's laugh, and he sat up, bewildered. There were voices on the street, and he leaned forward and looked out of the window. He could not see anything, but he recognized Jefferson's booming tones. For a moment, a murmur of talk reached him, and then he heard the sound of

feet on the steps. By that time he was sufficiently awake to realize his position of listener, and he turned to the unpacking of his carpetbag with great determination. That done, he undressed, and was just about to get into bed, when he heard the sound of Susanna's light feet in the hall, and the swish of her hoops against the wall. What, he wondered, had she found to do to keep her down-stairs for so long after her return?

CHAPTER XI

ANN'S INHERITANCE

Two days after her uncle's funeral, Ann received a telegram from his lawyer in New York.

"Mr. Cortlandt's will opened to-day. He left you half his estate."

What an unbelievable statement! . . . A half? She would be a rich woman. . . . She wondered what Peter would say, and when he came in, she handed him the telegram mutely, fearing that he might be displeased.

He did not seem to be, however. He took the message, read it hastily, shot a lightning glance at her face, and read it again, slowly. "Um," he said non-committally. He took a step away from her, and then swung around and kissed her heartily. She felt better after that, although nothing had been said.

"You will have to take care of it for me, Peter."

He nodded reassuringly. He was a little flushed. "Of course I'll have to," he said. He was thinking how he would feel walking into old Baker's bank with a fortune in his hand. . . . It would undoubtedly give him greater importance in the business world. . . . It wouldn't hurt his credit in the least. Dimly, he was beginning to realize the value of a rich wife, but presently he found himself—in spite of the new and exciting possibility in his life—thinking about his work. It was so much more important to him than anything else that

it was impossible for him to keep his mind off it for long.

Mr. Stephens had put through the Smith & Jefferson Company incorporation and was disposing of the stock. Peter kept a third for himself, Jeff took a quarter, and people were buying the remainder with something that resembled eagerness. . . . Already men were digging the foundations for the new buildings, and Peter awaited a blast furnace with overwhelming impatience.

His life was easier now, for he had made his chief roller foreman, and given him charge of the night shift. Thomas Brady was a brawny fellow, deep-chested and defiant, and, watching him on the first day that he had a gang under him, Peter knew he would prove a valuable man. He tied Brady to him by offering to carry for him shares of the company's stock, to be paid for from its dividends. Brady was delighted with the idea, and the Smith and Jefferson directors felt that a policy had been inaugurated which might prove important. The men all were encouraged to take out stock, with the understanding that the company would hold it for them until fully paid for. A large number of them did so, and the morale of the working force was greatly improved by this passing around of interest.

Peter was delighted with the spirit in his works, and was convinced that a certain amount of paternalism paid. In addition to the stock carrying accounts, the books in the office showed frequent advances of wages made in cases of sickness, or other emergency. Peter knew an amazing amount about Mike's consumptive wife or Joe's crippled boy; he would often stop on his way through the mill and ask about them and a score more. He knew all the men by name after the first few weeks, and they liked him and believed in him to an extraordinary extent. It was an important part of his success in running his plant.

2

Ann's fortune turned out to be much less than every one had expected, for Mr. Cortlandt's lawyer wrote her that his client's estate had greatly diminished in the last few years of his life, and that he had left only a very little over two hundred thousand dollars, to be divided, after certain minor bequests were made, between her and his nephew, Hendricks Rensselaer.

In due time a package of securities reached her. They meant nothing to her, and she turned them helplessly over to Peter. He examined them carefully, frowning as he always did when he concentrated.

"I don't wonder the old gentleman lost money," he said at length. "Some of this stuff is gilt-edged, but some of it isn't my idea of a good investment!" . . . He separated the certificates into two piles. "I should advise you to get rid of these as soon as you can, Annie!" His hand rested on the larger one.

"But who will buy them if they aren't any good?"

Peter laughed. "It's a funny thing,—some one always will. Do you want me to attend to it for you?"

"Oh, yes." Ann was greatly relieved. She had not thought of her inheritance coming to her in this perplexing form: she had expected a check, which might readily be transformed into money.

"You'll have to sign a paper making me your agent." Peter went over to Ann's little writing-desk, and drew up a simple form to which she put her signature. "Now you can forget all about it," he said reassuringly.

Some weeks later Ann received from New York a portrait which Mr. Cortlandt had had painted of her when she was seventeen years old. She had forgotten its existence, but when Peter opened the great box which contained it, it brought poignantly back to her the days of her happy youth in her uncle's house.

It was a large picture, painted in Mr. Cortlandt's library; Ann well remembered the shadowy background against which the young girl was posed. She had worn a white muslin dress: her wide skirts were festooned over crinoline, and she had a pale blue ribbon tied about her waist. Her face, turned back over a slight childish shoulder, was touchingly young and feminine. It had a curiously soft and impressionable look: it was a charming portrayal of innocence and virginity. "I can't believe I ever looked like that!" she exclaimed, from her vantage ground of an experienced married woman.

When Peter hung it in the little parlor of the cottage, it dominated the entire place, and he said half seriously, "I'll have to get a big house to put you in, Annie."

3

Ann's grief at her uncle's death coincided unfortunately with events in her own life. She had too much time on her hands. Nora had become so efficient that she left practically nothing for her mistress to do about the house, and the baby settled down to regular hours, which meant that he slept the greater part of every day. It seemed extraordinary to his mother that a child could sleep so much, and she called in old Doctor Whipple, who had attended her when Hendricks was born, to consult him about it.

"If you had a family, you'd be glad enough to have him sleep," he told her shrewdly. "He is the picture of health, and so are you. . . . Good advertisements, both of you!"

Being both lonely and unoccupied, she fell in the habit of running across the street in search of companionship. She grew to like Mrs. Wilcox, and she found her reminiscences of early life in Chicago fascinating. It was the romance of the drab little woman's

youth which she told over her boarders' mending. Twenty-five years before she had started westward in search of the fortune which her dashing new husband was sure awaited him. They had driven out in a covered wagon, all the way from Newburyport to Chicago. Her simple annals were crowded with memories of bygone joys.

"I remember there was goldenrod everywhere: Will was always jumping off to pick some for me. . . . We talked, all day long. My husband was a great hand to talk," she added with a sudden dryness. "You would have thought he was going to be president, to hear him. He was handsome, too,—dark, like Susanna."

Ann marveled at the courage the depressed little woman must have had to undertake so valiant an expedition; certainly she showed little trace of it now, and yet she talked more calmly of prairie wolves howling about the environs of a pioneer town than she did of the perils of keeping boarders in a modern city of paved and lighted streets.

4

Susanna was always restive under her mother's remembrances. For her daily life was too thrilling a thing to be pushed aside by a shadowy past. She was preoccupied, too, by her relations with her mother's boarders. On the night Titus took her to the courthouse where Abraham Lincoln lay in state, he had, being greatly worked up by an emotional day, kissed her when he had her home again, and he had swept her into a breathtaking excitability which Daniel had quite failed to arouse. On the following morning, however, he behaved as though nothing at all unusual had happened, and she had not had a satisfactory talk with him since, notwithstanding the fact that she had used all her simple strategy to catch him unawares. . . . She discovered that Jefferson's appearance of guilelessness

was misleading. He was, as a matter of fact, so uncannily wary that she began to think of him with resentment, and instinctively she played Daniel Lunt, providentially returned in an hour of need, off against him.

The unsuspicious recipient of this duplicity was greatly heartened by it. Susanna, in her softened mood, was very seductive, but she proved to be strangely elusive, and like mankind all the world over, the more he couldn't get her the more he wanted her. Finally, in desperation, he asked her formally, across the supper table, if she would go with him to the opening of Crosby's Opera House, on the Monday following the funeral.

Her eyes opened wide at that, for the opening was a great event. "I should love to go," she said, with a little catch in her breath.

The dress which she was to wear then became a matter of concern. After much study of *Godey's Ladies' Book* illustrations, she chose what she thought was the supreme picture, and when the critical moment of cutting out came, Ann was called in. She had a fearlessness in wielding the scissors which made Mrs. Wilcox turn pale, but which proved to be effective, and at fittings she was inspired. No one could have denied, when the dress was completed, that it had an air.

Susanna herself feared that possibly it had too much. "Mr. Lunt is so very conservative," she told Ann. "I am not sure he will approve of so low a neck."

Her friend made a vicious slash with the scissors, and an inch or two more of Susanna's white shoulders came into view. "Do him good," she said energetically. She had her own views about Daniel Lunt: she liked him, but she thought him a laggard lover.

Susanna longed to confide her difficulties to Ann, but she was unable to overcome the secretiveness which was natural to her. She was certain that her friend

would give her wise advice, as well as the rosy sympathy of the newly married, but she couldn't quite bring herself to lay all of her cards on the table.

"Do you like Mr. Lunt?" she asked one day. It was as near as she could get to it.

"Indeed I do. Don't you?"

"Oh, yes,—I like him. I like Mr. Jefferson, too."

"I should never think of comparing him to Daniel Lunt."

"Why not?"

"Well, Mr. Lunt is a gentleman, for one thing. . . . Titus is just a trifler."

Susanna's face fell. "Do you think so?" she said miserably.

Ann nodded. "Peter says that Mr. Lunt will be at the head of the bar some day. He thinks he is awfully clever."

"Yes, I guess he is." The girl's voice was dejected. She took her sewing, and moved over to the window, where her face was hidden. "I suppose you are right," she said resignedly, and after that she said nothing at all, for a long time.

CHAPTER XII

SUSANNA AND DANIEL

SUSANNA looked her best on the night of the gala opening of the new opera-house. She was pleasantly stimulated by a conviction that her new dress was a success, and by the knowledge that she was going, a part of the gay world, to an event of undoubted social importance. She had more color than usual, and there was an added sparkle in her blue eyes; Daniel Lunt had never seen her look so pretty. He lingered in putting her shawl about her; through the thin material he could feel the softness of her shoulders.

"Bother the opera," he said, as he seated himself beside her in the cab.

Susanna looked at him with uncomprehending eyes. To her the evening meant a distinct enlargement of her horizon, and she was disposed to think well of Daniel, who had made it possible. She talked fluently all the way in the cab. "They say the theater is perfectly lovely. . . . They say there's nothing finer anywhere. . . . They say everybody, who is anybody, will be there. . . . I don't know what *Il Trovatore* is about, but that doesn't matter."

Lunt sat back in his seat, content to feel the silken flow of the girl's dress against his hand, and said very little. He was wondering what she would do should he take her hand in his. He wanted enormously to do so, but he couldn't summon the necessary courage

until they joined the queue of carriages before the theater. Then he leaned forward and squeezed her fingers, briefly and unsatisfactorily. Susanna stopped midway in what she was saying, and looked at him with startled eyes. They drew up before the door, and he helped her out with unnecessary care.

Afterward it struck Lunt as strange how little consciousness he had of what was going on about him that evening. The new theater was filled with a brilliant audience, but it did not exist for him. It was inaugurated with speeches, but he did not listen to them. He paid no attention at all to the performance. He was engulfed in his emotions. The thing which really seemed to him important was his sensation as he helped his companion remove her shawl, and as his arm brushed hers when she settled back in her place. He could, without turning, look down on the outline of a warmly colored cheek, and dark hair which was curled artfully, so that one ringlet lay against the young girl's white, immature shoulder. The exquisite texture of her skin was apparent to him, notwithstanding the discretion of his glance. After the first intermission he shifted in his seat and moved nearer to her. He could feel his heart beat quick and hard when she did not draw away.

This subterranean world of feeling was unsuspected by Susanna. From the moment she entered the crowded lobby she had been gloriously excited; all the well dressed, smiling people went to her head as wine might have done if she had ever tasted it. She was certain that life must be like this in New York . . . in London even,—or Paris. . . . The world was before her. Like an enthusiastic but momentarily reluctant swimmer, she hesitated at the instant of the plunge, deliciously.

Everything contributed to her sense of having a superlatively good time. The mere size of the big

theater inflated her; crystal chandeliers hung from the ceiling, and the place was flooded with gas light; it was more brilliant than anything she had ever seen. She looked about her eagerly at the gilding and decorations. On the ceiling conventionally unclad goddesses disported themselves amid roses. Susanna blushed. She wondered why they had pictures like those.

She thought the ladies in the boxes looked very elegant indeed. "Who is she!" she kept demanding of Lunt, unconscious of his abstraction. She was pleased and a little self-conscious when one of these superior beings bowed to him. She had never before realized that he numbered among his friends people like that. It made her think of him quite simply and enviously as a fortunate person: she liked him better than she ever had, in the light of this revelation. She was very talkative in the intermissions, and now and then when the curtain was up she would whisper to Daniel, her lips near his ear. She was delightfully thrilled, and the music, which she did not in the least understand, carried her excitement on waves of glittering sound.

It was late when the performance was over, and it took Lunt some time to find their cab, as all the carriages in town were congested before the opera-house doors. Susanna took shelter in the lee of a marble pedestal in the lobby: above her head a white bust of Psyche smiled coquettishly over a fair shoulder, but the young girl had no eyes for her. She was passionately interested in the passing crowd. She took mental notes on the manner of the other women: she marked how they arranged their hair; their clothes intoxicated her, and she was torn between two ideas for remaking an old wrap. . . . These women seemed to her to be extraordinarily self-possessed; uncertain herself, she envied them their poise. She felt conspicuously lonely, for the others were talking together as they went out. They all seemed to know one another intimately. This,

Susanna knew, was Society. She was very humble, standing there in her home-made dress; now and then she caught an admiring glance, but she was not encouraged by it. She knew it was only because she was pretty. She wished, forlornly, that it might have been her clothes which drew that look of startled feminine approval.

The woman who had bowed to Lunt passed her with a curious glance, and it seemed to the girl a tragedy that Daniel was not there to introduce her. She thought of the young lawyer differently to-night: he had a touch of the fortunate youth about him, which she had never before suspected. . . . Across the lobby she had a sudden glimpse of a tall man; for a startled instant she thought that it might be Titus, but it was not. . . . She was aware of an inexplicable touch of melancholy. . . . She sighed unconsciously, and looking up met Daniel's ardent gaze, as he came back through the crowd for her.

Inside the cab she was conscious of a tension which silenced her chatter, as a child's gaiety is silenced by a change to a bleaker atmosphere. She sat well back in her corner, but in a moment she could feel a steady and disconcerting pressure of her companion's shoulder against her own. There was nothing, now, to divert her from this insistent physical touch: she could hear his uneven breath, he was so close to her. Her high spirits were quenched, automatically. The cab lurched over a rough pavement, and Daniel Lunt slipped his arm about her shoulders. She glanced at him uneasily; he was portentously grave.

As their eyes met, he whispered brokenly, "I love you." It seemed to her that the low words, which she could scarcely hear, echoed through the little cab, loud and frightening. She attempted to free herself, but Lunt continued to hold her, with a light firm touch. "I love you," he said again, more urgently.

He hadn't intended to blurt his declaration out in so inept a fashion, but his emotion had taken the bit in its teeth. He was frightened, too, but although the spring night was warm, he could feel Susanna tremble, and he took courage from that. "Do you care for me at all?" he demanded. "Could you?"

There was an appreciable moment of silence in the creaking cab before Susanna lifted pretty eyes to meet his intense look. "I think I could," she said, half doubtfully.

Lunt pressed her closer to him at this admission, and kissed her hair,—her cheek,—her lips.

She drew back from his rough masculine advance with panicky distaste. To Daniel she seemed exquisitely feminine and fastidious.

2

The wedding was a very simple affair. Susanna's trousseau was as meager as possible, and she was married in a white muslin dress in which she looked as lovely as a bride well could, but which had been inexpensive to the point of making her doubt its fitness. She wore a tulle veil over her dark hair, and carried the bridegroom's roses. His friends from more fashionable parts of town pronounced her charming, as, indeed, she was.

Mrs. Lunt did not come on from New Hampshire for the ceremony, but it was arranged, after an interchange of stiff letters, that the wedding trip should include a visit at her farm. Daniel was delighted to be returning there with a wife, and Susanna was so thrilled at the prospect of seeing New York City that she acquiesced in everything he suggested. No bride could have been more docile.

The cottage on Loomis Street was rather gloomy on the evening of the wedding, for it was impossible to

overcome its air of meager poverty. There were not lights enough to be gay, and there was not furniture enough to be comfortable, although Ann had sent over all she could for the occasion. Supper was more reassuring, however, for Nora was officiating in the kitchen, and the odd assortment of friends which a small wedding brings out stood about the table, thinking that, after all, there was something to be said for the bride's family. Every one murmured that the chicken salad was delicious.

Mrs. Wilcox, dressed in an old silk, turned, not too successfully, for the occasion, was ill at ease and miserable. She was far too much worried about the party to indulge in maternal regrets for her daughter. Her brows were drawn fretfully together, and she could not help wondering if there would be enough of these unprecedented delicacies left over to feed Titus for a day or two, and thus give her an opportunity to recoup. With singular success she resisted the polite efforts of her guests to include her in what geniality the occasion afforded.

She liked Daniel Lunt, and she humbly agreed with her daughter that he was in the nature of a "catch." He was very good to his prospective mother-in-law, and she sometimes thought that Susanna might have been nicer to him than she ordinarily was. She was not really concerned, however, as she thought that Daniel was quite nice enough for both of them. There was an imposing number of wedding gifts. Lunt's friends had sent a few pieces of silver, a steel engraving or two, and books, which seemed to Mrs. Wilcox to be a criminal waste of money. Ann and Peter had given the bride knives and forks and spoons, and Daniel had bought her a gold watch, with emerald green enamel on the case. No rich girl could have had a better start, her mother told her humbly, already falling into a subservient place.

3

New York City enchanted Susanna: something within her responded ardently to its metropolitan appeal, and for the first day or two there, she wandered happily about with her husband, looking at what he bade her, and saying little of her impressions. Her adjectives were few: "pretty," or "nice," were oftenest on her lips; it was difficult to know just what she was thinking, but her simplicity delighted Daniel, who was not in a mood to be censorious.

They went to grand opera and to the theater, as a matter of course on a honeymoon, and on their third day in town they dined at Delmonico's. Daniel ordered the meal with great care; it amused him to give his bride strange and delicious viands listed under French names,—a mysterious allure! The bright restaurant was gay with gilding and color, and well filled with people. It was something of a surprise to Daniel to see that New Yorkers dressed to the extent they did in the evening; ladies sailed into the room attired as if for a ball, and men wore clothes hitherto beyond the New Englander's simple ken. It amused him to look at them, but after a few moments he observed with alarm that Susanna's light elation, which had stimulated him as they drove to the fashionable restaurant in their cab, was dropping from her. She ate her meticulously selected dinner as if it were nothing at all out of the ordinary: her sparkle was quenched; her smile at his effort to reanimate her was pathetic. Daniel was in a panic. He could not find out what was the matter, and he could not make her rise above it. The festive little dinner was a complete failure, but on the way back to the hotel in a cab Susanna clung to him as she had not yet done. Why, he did not know, but he suspected that he was her port in some mysterious storm.

For the next day or two, she sat in their hotel room a good part of the time, looking drearily out of the window at the panorama of Fifth Avenue. Her melancholy frightened Daniel, who felt himself at fault. He increased his tender consideration of her, but to no avail, for finally he came in to find her in tears.

"My child, what is it?" he asked solicitously. "What have I done?"

His wife stopped crying, and looked up at him in amazement. "You?" she inquired rather sharply. "Why,—nothing."

"Then what is the matter?" Incredulity was in his tone; he felt that he must fill her horizon, as she filled his.

At his inquiry Susanna's grief again overwhelmed her. "It's my clothes!" she wailed, and sobbed dismally.

Lunt looked down at her, for a moment stupefied by amazement; then he bent to kiss the soft back of her neck. "I like your clothes," he murmured gently.

"I'm not fit to go out on the street."

"If you feel that way about it,—let's go buy some more."

Susanna sat suddenly upright; she looked more radiant than her husband had ever seen her. "Could we?" she asked, enraptured.

The bridegroom laughed, and catching her in his arms, he kissed her. "We can if you are good," he told her. He was pleasantly elated at his godlike ability to banish his wife's low spirits.

In the shops Susanna became another being. Watching her, Lunt was amused to see her preen before a mirror, attentive to the saleswoman's praise, but discriminating to a degree which prolonged the affair of shopping interminably. One by one other things they had planned to do were abandoned in favor of further search for superlative garments, but Daniel had no

regrets. Susanna was happy, and he took a vicarious pleasure in her adoration of an ermine tippet, or her trills over a French bonnet.

After ten days in New York, the young people went to New Hampshire to see Mrs. Lunt. When they came into the familiar country where he had lived as a boy, Daniel found himself deeply moved. "Beautiful, isn't it?" he kept demanding, calling his wife's attention to sweeps of vigorous hillsides, where the vivid green of the fields was broken by darker patches of forest.

She looked out of the car window obediently. "Yes," she admitted. "It's pretty."

Daniel's mother met them at the station. He pointed her out to Susanna before the train stopped.

"Do you mean that old woman in black?"

He winced a trifle, and leaned to look again. He supposed that to a stranger she might seem an old woman; certainly her rusty black clothes were old. He waved to her from the window, and her face lighted up in response. . . . He could see that she had failed since he had been away. Susanna was right, he thought, as he stooped to kiss her; she was an old woman. She returned his kiss in the self-contained fashion which he remembered as a little boy, and said looking beyond him, "I guess that's your wife?"

Daniel drew her forward. "Yes, this is Susanna." He was hoping for the impossible; he was wishing that his mother would show some spontaneous affection.

The bride leaned forward, conventionally offering her cheek, but Mrs. Lunt only took her hand. "I'm glad to see you," she said. "It is time Daniel was married."

Susanna drew back, hurt. She did not know how to meet so cold a welcome, and glanced at her husband, to see what he thought about it. He was not looking at her; he was entirely occupied with his mother.

Mrs. Lunt had come for them in the village hack,

which made Daniel realize that getting married was an affair of importance. The only other time he had ridden in it was at his father's funeral, when he was a freshman in college.

From its musty interior, Susanna looked out at a prim village. It wasn't much of a place; there was only a quarter of a mile of white houses with green shutters, strung along the main street, and a common where tall elm trees made a deep shade in front of a white, high-steepled church, with a graveyard beside it.

"All my ancestors since 1690 are buried there," Daniel told his wife. "I'll take you to see their graves."

Susanna shuddered, for cemeteries were in no way a part of her middle west tradition, but Mrs. Lunt's stern face softened as she looked out of the window of the hack. "Daniel's father used to court me there," she admitted. "It's right sweet in the springtime."

Leaving the settlement behind them, they dropped abruptly into wild farming country.

"Aren't you lonely?" Susanna inquired, and Daniel saw his mother glance at her with quick appraisal.

They drove along a hilly road which sometimes ran through groves of pines, when Mrs. Lunt sniffed delicately, and sometimes turned a bold corner, where a lovely expanse of country-side broken with standing crops was spread before them. One could see a long way off then, into purple distances. Daniel pointed out objects which interested him. "That is where I went to school. . . . We used to fish in that creek. . . . There are wintergreen berries in those woods, and arbutus, almost before the snow melts." Finally he said, as they rounded a corner marked by a magnificent sentinel elm, "That's our house."

Ahead of them was a white farm-house, set well back from the road, with high lilac bushes before it. It was classical in style, and had a Georgian cornice and an egg and dart moulding about an elaborate doorway.

In spite of the fact that it needed paint, its quality was eloquent of better days. Back of it, in New England fashion, sheds and outhouses were strung along to make a covered way to the barn.

"It's old-fashioned, isn't it?" Susanna said.

They drove into the yard: a side door opened, and two old ladies came out. Susanna remembered that Daniel's great-aunt lived with his mother, and she decided that the gaunt bent creature, who did not venture off the step, must be she. Mrs. Lunt explained that the other was her cousin Sarah, from Salem.

"She has been staying with me since her husband died," she told Susanna.

"It's Daniel's wife!" the visiting cousin shouted to the great-aunt, who was deaf.

Susanna approached her unwillingly; she did not like old people, but she allowed the octogenarian to kiss her fresh cheek.

Up-stairs in their square bedroom, filled with a melancholy scent of the past, she turned on Daniel. "How long do we have to stay?" she demanded desperately.

Supper that night was a sad affair. Notwithstanding its fine proportions, the dining-room was dreary. The fireplace was papered over, and on the mantelshelf were ranged sinister medicine bottles filled with nauseous dark colored liquids. A table covered with a grayish white cloth stood in the center of the room. On it were a cruet containing vinegar and oil, a loaf of bread, a plate of butter, and a thick white pitcher filled with milk. Daniel's grandfather's mahogany sideboard gleamed darkly at one end of the room, and in the window there was an antiquated sewing-machine.

The old woman was next the bride. Shapeless and sexless, she sat hunched down into tumbled black garments, and in the light of an oil lamp which hung over the table, Susanna could see that her scant white hair

barely covered her pink scalp. She could scarcely bear to look at her, and her eyes kept filling with silly tears which she could with difficulty wink away.

Odors of cooking drifted in from the kitchen, and presently Mrs. Lunt appeared, bearing a platter. Daniel sprang to take it from her, and the great-aunt, who had been silent until then, cackled with laughter at his gallantry. The cousin cut thick slices of bread from the loaf, while Mrs. Lunt "dished up" the meat.

At nine o'clock they all went up to bed. Once inside their room, Susanna faced her husband desperately. "How long do we have to stay?" she demanded again.

Daniel crossed the room and opened the window, before answering. He was rather slow about putting in the nail which held it up. "It's pretty bad, isn't it?" he then said. "It makes me feel guilty."

"Why?"

"I've been living in such comfort, you see."

She let that pass. "I couldn't eat a thing," she said, with quivering lips.

Her husband took her in his arms and kissed her. "We won't stay long," he told her soothingly.

The following day Daniel made a point of getting his mother alone. "See here, mother," he said, "you'll have to get a hired girl."

She looked up at him, startled. "What nonsense!"

"I can't have you working so hard."

"I like to work. . . . I'm used to it. I've never had a helper since your father died."

Daniel winced. He knew the truth of this, and that the money which had gone into his education would have kept his mother in comparative luxury. "Things are different now," he told her. "I'm making money."

"I guess you'll need it. . . . Has your wife anything of her own?"

"No."

"Well,—I won't have a hired girl poking her nose round my house. I couldn't stand it, Daniel."

That settled it for the moment, and later she said to him, "Your wife agrees with me. . . . She sees no need of my hiring help."

He didn't like his mother's tone when she spoke of Susanna. It drove him into a defensive attitude which made him treat her like a stranger, and he soon discovered that no one was enjoying his long anticipated visit. In the circumstances, he fabricated business in Chicago, and cut their stay short.

Susanna was like a child in her happiness at this decision, and the cousin and great-aunt were clamorously regretful, but Mrs. Lunt closed her lips firmly, and betrayed no feeling at all in the matter.

"Your mother doesn't like me," Susanna said mournfully to Daniel.

It was not until they were at the station, and the train which was to take them away was rumbling toward them down the track, that Mrs. Lunt betrayed any emotion. Then she looked at her son with stark eyes, and said, "I am a very disagreeable old woman, Dannie."

Inside the car, Susanna was fussing about the dirt. "It will just ruin my bonnet," she complained fretfully.

CHAPTER XIII

WIDENING HORIZONS

The first eighteen months in the new plant were prosperous ones for the Smith and Jefferson Company. Mr. Baker continued to secure business for the new corporation, and Jeff's wide acquaintance proved of value when it came to getting orders. One of his friends in particular, an alderman of a somewhat dubious reputation, turned various contracts for public work to the young men, and while Peter frowned at the rebates which his optimistic partner agreed upon, there always remained an ample margin of profit, for he was learning to make cheap iron. He let steel alone, but his dreams, while he turned out a satisfactory tonnage of iron rails, were of a converter which should make steel ones practical.

His business was not the only way in which he expanded during this critical time, for the birth of a second son, when little Hendricks was two years old, proved that the cottage was too small for his family. He began to look about for another house, and he came in one Sunday afternoon with his heart set on a five-story one built of "Athens Marble," and facing Union Park.

Ann was aghast. "Peter, it would cost a fortune to live there!"

"I can swing it all right." He was always evasive about the size of his income, but she observed that his voice had the resonance of one completely assured.

On the first day she went out, she drove out to South Western Plank Road to see the house. "My dear, it's enormous!"

"Well, why not? I'm making money. We have two children, already."

Ann looked at him in open disgust. "Little Peter is just one month old," she said. "Aren't you counting your chickens before they are hatched?"

Peter brushed this aside. "Don't you like the place?" he demanded.

"It's lovely, but it is too big."

"If that's all, I'll buy it."

Ann sighed. In spite of her consciousness of a natural exultation,—for the place enchanted her,—she could not help being distressed at the size of the venture.

"I wish you would let me pay for it," she suggested.

Peter frowned. "We'll leave your money where it is," he said, "and let the interest accumulate."

It was the first time her inheritance had been mentioned since she had given her husband the securities. It had been like dropping it down a well.

In a few days Peter became the possessor of a tall, slim, mortgaged house, built of cream-colored stone, in a row of other houses exactly like it. It had high stone steps, and forbidding black walnut doors, which folded back against the sides of a vestibule just big enough to hold them; the inside doors were of frosted glass with a geometrical design cut into them. On the main floor there were two symmetrical parlors, with sliding doors between, and in each room there was a white marble mantel, while crystal chandeliers, piped for gas, hung from plaster medallions in the centers of the two ceilings. In the basement, down an enclosed stairway, there was a dining-room in the front, a kitchen in the rear, and a black pantry between the two rooms. Upstairs were two floors of bedrooms and an attic, and in the dark center of the house, where a gas-jet always

flickered, there was a bathroom. It had in it a deep, short, tin tub, encased in black walnut woodwork, and a small round wash basin set in a marble top. Peter was very proud of this apartment; it had influenced him greatly in his selection of the house, and he was obliged to stifle a desire to display it to callers.

The Smiths moved when little Peter was still very young, and as a result, his mother went to bed again, tired out. She lay, wan and white, in the alcove off the front bedchamber, and worried about the rest of the house. At intervals Nora stole up from the kitchen and told her dire things of the new second girl, whose duties were, simply, to wait on and set the table, make the beds, clean the entire house, dust, answer the door, and do the cooking on wash days. . . . There was a new nurse, too, supposed to be temporary at first, but retained after Ann was about again, and the things which Nora hinted about her seriously retarded her mistress's recovery. . . . Ann worried about expenses. Eight dollars seemed a fabulous amount of money to spend every week in wages, but Peter had bought a span of horses and engaged a hired man, so she supposed that he could manage. She had not, by this time, the faintest idea of what his income was.

When she recovered her strength, she found herself delighted with her house. She liked its high ceilings and its air of spacious dignity. She wished that Mr. Cortlandt might have seen it: its formal proportions were not unlike those in the house where he had lived in Washington Square. . . . She thought it was extraordinarily clever of Peter to have achieved all this magnificence so quickly; she had been certain of his ultimate success, but she had never believed that it could be so rapid. She wondered about his future, wistfully. Would he go on making more and more money? Was he destined to take a leadership in this brisk new city which might be compared to that which Mr. Cort-

landt had enjoyed in New York? She felt that she did not know enough about him to be able to tell.

The children in their enchanting babyhood absorbed her. Little Hendricks at two was a sturdy child, with a serious round face and a thatch of light hair which curled in tiny rings. He was a matter-of-fact baby, who laughed obligingly at the obvious things grown people did to amuse him, and never cried unless he wanted something. Ann endowed him with every charm and virtue: she was certain that there never had been such a child. Peter, Jr., was less spectacularly perfect. Perhaps because his mother had not been so abundantly well when he was born, he had a poor start: he was the old-fashioned baby with colic. Ann trembled for him; his cry awoke her most tender maternal fears. He was a plain infant, but she never admitted it, and his delicacy made her even more devoted to him than she was to his brother. The two of them occupied her life.

2

Ann thought that Daniel came home from his honeymoon looking badly. Susanna, on the contrary, was blooming, and her new clothes were very becoming. She found her novel situation as a young matron enchanting, and the ladies who came to call were delighted with her. Her vivacity was unending: she was everything a young bride should be, and Daniel was continually being told that he was a lucky fellow.

In the early ardent days in his new home, he fully agreed with this statement. He and Susanna had great fun settling: he became the kind of husband who hangs pictures and moves furniture cheerfully about, and he bought a great many things which he could ill afford,—with pleasure, in spite of his New England thriftiness.

They settled on the north side of the city in a tiny frame house with a big yard. Daniel had taken it for

granted that his mother-in-law would live with them, but Susanna drew her pretty brows ominously together when he spoke of it. "What an idea!" she exclaimed disdainfully. "She can perfectly well go on keeping boarders until we are better off."

Daniel was relieved, but his conscience spurred him to further protest. "Half the people we know have some one living with them,—a mother, or an aunt, or a sister."

"Well, we won't have, that's settled," Susanna said decidedly, and Mrs. Wilcox remained in the Loomis Street cottage.

Now and then she came over for Sunday dinner, and Daniel gave her the choice parts of whatever he was carving, but that was the beginning and end of their intimacy. He had an uneasy feeling that his wife saw very little of her mother, and he suspected that filial obligations slipped easily off her pretty sloping shoulders.

Her husband's financial condition was a disappointment to Susanna. As a bachelor he had seemed extraordinarily well to do, but competency is entirely comparative, after all, and she had not been married to him long before she could easily spend a little more than his income. She developed what might be called a genius for clothes, and no other woman in town dressed with greater charm and distinction than the young lawyer's pretty wife. She took an enormous satisfaction in this, partly because she liked lovely things, and partly because it gave her the courage her inexperience needed to feel that she was perfectly turned out. Her ambitions were entirely definite. She wanted social leadership, and, more simply, she wanted a good time. Beautiful clothes, she was convinced, were a means to these ends.

From the beginning the young couple were much invited. Susanna's gaiety lifted the level of any din-

ner party which she attended, and in the year following his marriage, Lunt made a reputation for himself as a good talker among the men after the ladies had left them to their cigars. They were greatly in demand. . . . Daniel liked to look across a shining damask table-cloth at Susanna; she seemed to him prettier than when he had married her, and in those moments he was proud to think that she belonged to him. . . . Curiously enough, it was at evening parties, where other men surrounded her, that she seemed more wholly his than when he shut the door of their house upon her, and turned from the clumsy lock to see her vanishing up the stairs. Often she paused on the narrow turn to call down to him that she was monstrously sleepy.

It would have been difficult for Daniel to have said just what he thought of married life. Certainly it differed from his anticipations, and in many respects it fell below them. The intimate companionship which in his innocence he had counted upon, was disappointing, but he was unquestionably more light-hearted than he had been in his bachelor days. Susanna had a charming gift of gaiety; she made her husband laugh over trifles. He was amazed at the little things he could laugh at, and be the happier for it, and he felt if that were a measure for contentment, his marriage was unquestionably a success.

At the end of a year and a half they had no baby. It was not a matter they discussed with any frankness, but Susanna sometimes dropped a commiserating phrase about Ann, and her husband gathered that she did not envy her friend the responsibility of a family. Daniel had no complaint to make of this: he was, himself, in no great hurry to experience parenthood, and he took it for granted that some day they would have a family. It was only when he played with Peter's youngsters that he wished he had one of his own.

His practise had grown more than he would have

thought possible, but even with frequent and generous fees, he never seemed to have money enough to meet his household expenses. . . . He learned to dread the first of the month. His first serious disagreement with Susanna was about bills; she listened to a few well chosen remarks on economy, and then burst into tears. . . . He found, later, that she always cried when he talked expenses. . . . There seemed to be nothing for it except to earn more money.

In justice to Susanna, it must be said that she accomplished miracles with Daniel's income: her house was charming; she entertained delightfully, and she always remembered to include her husband's clients. She was very punctilious about that, and she paid great attention to them when they were seated next her at dinner: no one of them grumbled about the size of his bill for legal talent immediately after that experience, for Lunt's wife looked convincingly expensive. Even Peter used to say to his partner that he guessed Dan needed the money.

The two men became very good friends indeed. In the confidential relation of client and lawyer, Peter betrayed his inhibitions with a frankness altogether disarming, and Lunt found himself entertaining the liveliest feeling of liking for him. He was fond of Ann, too, and was always urging his wife to see more of her. This she was willing enough to do, but she found her life increasingly involved in neighborhood festivities which her old friend did not share; she had little time for anything else.

"Ann lives so far away," she would say, and invariably add, "Of course, if we had a carriage that would make a difference."

3

Peter amazed Ann one evening by emerging from a somewhat glum silence with the statement that he

thought they did not fill as important a place as they should in Chicago.

"Here we are," he said; "we've got a big house and money enough to do things in style. Look what Susanna does on a quarter the amount!"

Ann gazed at him in the greatest amazement. She had never been more surprised. "I didn't dream you cared about that sort of thing," she said.

"I don't. God knows, I hate going to parties! But I've been thinking about it. A lot of people have asked us to do things, Annie. Why can't we give some sort of party that will knock 'em in the eye?"

Ann was startled, for Peter was quite serious, and it was intolerable to her to acknowledge an ulterior motive behind social intercourse. Nevertheless, she felt pleasantly competent to do what he wished. "Mr. Bryant is coming to town," she said, not quite irrelevantly. "I knew him well in New York. We might ask some people to meet him."

"The poet?" Peter inquired, with a sparkle in his eye, and added with a burlesque of dismay. "What in the world would I talk to a poet about?"

He was pleased at her suggestion, she could see that, and she followed it up with an idea of her own. "You know, Peter," she said, "I don't think we do enough about charity."

"I contribute to every one who reaches me with a subscription list," Peter said irritably. "Besides that, the men in the shop are always wanting help, and you take baskets around to needy people on the church list. . . . I know you snatch my old clothes away from me just when they get comfortable! I don't see but what we do enough."

"All these committees for the development of art, and education, and things like that seem to me awfully important."

Peter frowned. "I suppose you're right. The next

time I'm asked to go on one, I'll try to make the time for it. How about you, Annie? Why don't you go on some board?"

"Perhaps I will," she said. "We'll see."

It was only a week or two later that Mrs. Baker drove over to the west side to invite Ann to serve on the Ladies' Auxiliary Committee of the Erring Woman's Refuge. "It is very necessary charity, my dear. . . . These unfortunate women exist; they must have Christian influences brought to bear upon them. . . . Their stories are extraordinary. . . . You would find the work very interesting."

Looking at her visitor, Ann thought that she caught a gleam of illicit pleasure in the old lady's faded eyes as she recalled histories of the unfortunate inmates of the Christian Home. . . . She did not want to be diverted at that expense, and at any rate, she was afraid she would be shy with fallen women. "The baby is not old enough for me to take up anything of that sort," she said speciously, and in the face of that maternal alibi, Mrs. Baker could not, in eighteen hundred and sixty-seven, insist.

Shortly after that the minister made an appeal to her for St Luke's Episcopal Hospital, which had been started during the war, and continued under the auspices of the church for the benefit of the poor of the city.

Ann made him the contribution he asked for, and said to him wistfully, "I wish I could find some work to do there."

The minister beamed upon her. "They need the influence of ladies in the wards," he said. "It would be of great benefit if you could find time to read to the adult patients, or help to amuse the children. . . . They would appreciate jelly, too, and other delicacies, as well as higher things."

This appealed to Ann, who had worked in soldiers'

hospitals during the war. She made an immediate impression on the doctors, who had found the influence of volunteer gentlewomen to be somewhat tenuous; they begged her to come often, and when the Ladies' Auxiliary Committee was founded, she became a member of it. Peter was well pleased. He thought that a hospital had a more satisfactory sound as a place for his wife's endeavors than an Erring Woman's Refuge.

CHAPTER XIV

ENTER TITUS JEFFERSON

ANN's evening reception in honor of Cullen Bryant was a much talked-of affair. She paid no attention at all to simple local customs when she made her plans. She said to herself, "I'll show Peter!" And she did.

In the first place she ordered a supper which included not only lobsters from the Atlantic coast, but terrapin from Baltimore as well. Mr. Cortlandt had always ordered terrapin when he gave an especially elegant party. He had always served champagne, too, and at his wife's request Peter, feeling delightfully a man-of-the-world, ordered three cases. People looked at the flat amber glasses in amazement, and a few not without disapproval, but for some reason the occasion was unprecedentedly gay.

Early in the evening the guests stood aridly about, and when the visiting poet gave them selections from his works they returned only self-conscious applause, but after supper they surrounded him with supplications for more. The bridge between them and an intellectual giant was crossed, and they felt that they had, surprisingly, arrived on his side of the gulf. It was no wonder they enjoyed themselves.

Susanna came early, but she was rather dubious about the evening. "A poet," she confided to Daniel on their way over to the west side, "is very stylish,— but he may not be amusing."

She did not find him so, for she was quite tongue-tied before the distinguished old man: all her usual ready chatter was frozen. Daniel made friends with him at once; and stood for some time talking with him and General Sheridan. She could see that he was enjoying himself, and she watched him resentfully. Poetry! What was there about it which made her feel an outsider?

She went off finally and sat in a corner with a man she detested. In the intervals of the reading she talked to him. He interested her no more than the poems did. It promised to be a miserable occasion.

However, when Mr. Bryant closed his book definitely, and allowed Ann to lead him toward the supper room, Titus Jefferson came over to Susanna, and she smiled up at him, relieved. Here was something which she understood,—something gay and pleasantly material. She had never got over her feeling of liking for her mother's wild lodger.

"Couldn't we find a place where it is cooler?" she asked him.

"I don't know why not," he answered, and with a murmur of regret to her earlier companion, she let Titus pilot her out into the hall. It was deserted there, as every one was crowding dutifully around the poet. They found a sofa, pushed under the stairs to be out of the way.

"This is fun!" Susanna declared, leaning back in her corner.

Jefferson agreed with her; he loved all pretty women. "We'll stay here," he told her masterfully.

She laughed self-consciously under his admiring look, but she had no inclination to move. She was, for the first time that evening, enjoying herself. . . . This was what she excelled in,—laughter and innuendo. . . . The look in her eyes changed and deepened as a suspicion dawned surprisingly upon her,—and grew to

conviction,—that her companion was still interested in her, notwithstanding her marriage. . . . A queer sort of exultation welled up within her. . . . She tried to remember exactly his expression when he kissed her, ages ago, and to compare it to his present ardent look. . . . It was a long time since she had been so delightfully excited. She felt alive all over.

Some time later Ann looked out into the hall, and saw her friend and her husband's partner sitting on the sofa under the stairs. Her inclination was to chaff them at their seclusion, but as she started toward them something in their complete absorption in each other checked her. . . . Daniel Lunt came up to her, and instinctively she led him away, where he could not look into the hall.

When it was all over, and every one had gone away, Peter strolled over to Ann, and kissed her. "Mrs. Baker said that no one had ever had a more elegant party in Chicago," he told her. It was evident to her that he was highly pleased, and also that he was somewhat inflated by the champagne he had drunk. She locked the doors herself, with a stern manner which inadequately masked her pleasure at her successful evening.

2

On New Year's Day Susanna in her turn made great preparations for a reception: it was a matter of some moment to be at home on that eventful afternoon.

"I shall ask Ann to receive with me," she told Daniel. "Since her party she has been all the rage."

Peter was not enthusiastic about leaving home on a day when people were certain to call, but Ann hung a basket on her door-bell in which cards might be left, and bore him off to the north side. She gave him the cards which she, like a good wife, had remembered to buy for him to leave upon certain ladies: they were

pink, with gold edges, and had "Happy New Year" engraved on them in gilt, as well as his name.

The Lunts' little house looked very pretty, set well back in a yard spread with a counterpane of snow. It was like a toy house, with its gleaming windows. From the top of each chimney a plume of thin grayish smoke melted into the gray day. The straight walk from the gate to the door was carefully shoveled; it was like a trench, between its piles of snow. The sentinel evergreens at either corner of the porch held great shelves of fleecy snow, and in the lacework of the vines delicate soft masses of it hung precariously. Inside the house fires glowed in every room, and candles gleamed on the mantles.

"Do you think they look too terrible?" Susanna asked Ann passionately. "The gas is frozen,—to-day of all times!" She was looking very pretty, in a new dress which was looped up behind, over the full hoops, in a faint premonition of the bustle which was to come.

In the dining-room Daniel was making an egg-nog with old Bourbon whisky, and on the sideboard port and Madeira were lined up in decanters. Dishes of chicken salad were on the table, and plates of small cakes with half an English walnut firmly imbedded in the frosting on the top of each one. On the center of the table Malaga grapes, jade green and firm, were prettily arranged with red apples from New York State. In the kitchen a caterer's cook was escalloping oysters. Freezers, borrowed from the neighbors, and filled with ice-cream, were clustered about the back steps.

Peter went out to pass an opinion on Daniel's egg-nog, and Ann and Susanna gave mysterious touches to their coiffures, put on their white gloves, and stood in the parlor window, watching for guests. At first they were very gay; their light laughter floated out to the dining-room, and the two husbands looked at each other, and smiled, but as time went on their high spirits

dropped. Presently Peter's hired man, borrowed for the occasion, went out and swept away a light film of blown snow from the path, and retired. Still no one ventured through the open gate.

"Wouldn't it be terrible if no one came?"

Ann treated this dismal possibility with proper scorn, and sure enough, almost as she spoke, a sleigh drew up before the gate, and four young men sprang out. They wore silk hats, in spite of the weather. Their ears were red under them, and they came rapidly up the walk.

Susanna and Ann leapt to their places; they adjusted their crinolines, and began to smile; when the young men came in, clad in irreproachable swallow-tails, they shook hands with them with no trace of relief. . . . They all began to talk. . . . Daniel came in, and urged egg-nog. . . . "The day is so cold." . . . More young men, also in swallow-tails, also with red ears. . . . More handshaking. . . . Old Mr. Baker exuding good wishes. . . . Titus Jefferson, who held both young women's hands a long time, and looked strickenly into their eyes. . . . More young men. . . . In no time at all the little house was congested with people. . . . A great roar of talk and a wave of warm air redolent with hot coffee, sprang out at newcomers when the front door was opened. . . . The oysters and the chicken salad and the ice-cream, to say nothing of Daniel's liquid refreshments, vanished like a dream. Susanna began to fear that there wouldn't be enough. . . . Now young men who came in were hilariously gay. . . . At other receptions they had tried other egg-nogs, but they assured Daniel, in loud jovial voices, that his was the best of all. . . . As dusk came on the gas providentially melted, and the chandeliers were lighted. . . . A report crept through the house that it was snowing again, and with real darkness the crowd melted away. . . . Finally there were but two

or three left, and Peter, who had been out making a call upon Mrs. Baker, came back. . . . He, too, told Daniel that his egg-nog was the best. . . . Ann and Susanna broke ranks, and sat down. When they came to think about it, they were tired. Titus, who still remained, brought them glasses of Madeira, and they sat primly sipping it, while the men foraged for their escalloped oysters and chicken salad, ice-cream and cakes.

"It's delicious, Susanna," Ann murmured, as she settled down to her plate, but Susanna was gone. Titus had taken her off into the empty dining-room and established her in a chair before the fire. When Ann looked through the open doorway she could see him urging her to taste Daniel's egg-nog.

3

Crosby's Opera House, which opened so auspiciously, did not prove a profitable investment, and as it was found impossible to find a purchaser who would pay what it was worth, it was decided to dispose of the property by lottery, and sell shares in the building and its widely advertised furnishings.

The drawing for the lucky numbers was held on the stage. It interested people all over the country, and the demand for seats was tremendous. Susanna, thrilled at the excitement of the gamble, was eager to go, but she found her husband indifferent.

"My child, I can't waste my time in that fashion! I didn't buy a ticket. We can't afford that sort of dissipation."

It was in vain that she pouted or smiled: he was adamant, and when Titus asked her to go with him she accepted with greater alacrity than she often allowed herself when offered one of his many invitations. Ever since the night of Ann's reception he had favored

her with an especial regard, which took the form of long looks and constant attentions, but she was extremely careful what she did with him. She would not drive with him in his splendid new sleigh behind his famous "blacks," nor meet him at the various places he suggested, for her position was too new a thing to risk losing by an injudicious flirtation. She made a point of seeing quite as much of other men as she did of Titus, and of talking devotedly of Daniel. She was certain that no one was gossiping,—certain indeed, that there was nothing to gossip about,—but she thought of Jefferson incessantly, partly because she was not quite sure of him, and partly because new admiration always excited her. It added an undeniable flavor to a party to know that Titus was going to it for the especial purpose of seeing her. . . . He always managed to get her alone for a moment, at least, and to arrange for their next meeting. . . . She felt like a girl again.

On the morning of the drawing Titus called for her in his sleigh. She had been dressing for an hour, and her hair and her clothes were perfect when she opened the front door in answer to his ring.

"That's a good girl,—all ready!"

The air was frosty, and she drew her mink trimmed dolman close about her. "Let's hurry," she said. She ran down the snow covered path to the gate, her feet making small sharp impressions beside Jefferson's huge ones.

Titus tucked the buffalo robe carefully about her. They sat close together in the sleigh,—because of the cold, she said to herself when he settled down beside her. The "blacks," released from restraint by their driver, sprang forward with a great jangling of bells. They were very fast, and their swift feet threw a succession of pattering little balls of snow against the wooden dash board. The air, pure and cold, beat against

Susanna's face, whipping color into her cheeks, and brightness into her eyes. She shuddered down into the buffalo robe, all smiles.

A great crowd surged about the entrance of the Opera House, but Jefferson drove past it, and turned into the alley beyond. At a slim door in the blank wall, he stopped.

"This is the stage entrance," he said. "We can get in this way."

"How did you know about it?" Susanna asked wonderingly.

In no time at all they had found seats, and she admired Titus extravagantly. Daniel had by no means this effectiveness. She was certain that he would never have known about that discreet rear door.

It was a noisy crowd. People shouted across the house to one another, and clapped impatiently; men whistled through their teeth, and cat calls came from the balcony. Susanna thought how recently she had been one of a decorous audience there at a performance of *La Somnambula* and turned to look at the box where she had sat. A group of young men had taken possession of it; they waved to her wildly. It was not far from where she was that she had sat with Daniel when the opera-house opened, only two years ago. . . . She drew away from Titus, as she recalled that night.

Ann was sitting near them, with Mr. and Mrs. Baker. Susanna waved to her friend with the least possible more emphasis than she would have, had she not been there with Titus. . . . Was Ann never bored? . . . Did she feel no need of excitement, outlawed or not? . . . She wished that she knew; she would have liked to measure herself against her conservative friend. It would be possible, then, to know the extent she had already deteriorated.

A wheel was brought out upon the stage when the drawing was actually about to begin, and the clamor-

ous crowd fell suddenly silent. . . . Susanna saw that Titus held a paper in his hand, which was covered with figures; he consulted it as each number was announced.

"I plunged on this thing," he confided to her. "I'd hate to confess how many shares I bought. . . . Don't tell Pete," he added. "He'd think I was crazy not to put it in the iron business!"

Susanna laughed. "Probably you were," she said teasingly. She glanced at Jefferson demurely. She thought that the checked trousers and tail coat he wore suited him, but the diamond in his shirt-front made her say, "You need a wife, Titus."

He made a pretense of taking the stud out. "You can have it," he said. "I'd rather give it to you than any one else!"

He drew nothing, but he was not in the least cast down. On the way to the door Susanna heard a man say, "That's Titus Jefferson. They say he had fifteen thousand dollars in chances!"

She looked at him aghast, but he grinned down at her, rather pleased by this notoriety. "You mustn't believe all you hear," he told her, "especially about me."

The sleigh was waiting, and after he had tucked her in, Titus said, "I suppose you won't go for a ride?"

She shook her head regretfully. "Better not. People would talk if they saw us."

"You could go to see your mother, I suppose, without any one gossiping?"

A gleam came into Susanna's eyes. "I guess I might," she conceded gravely, and as they started she added, "I tell Daniel that horses would really be an economy. I ruin all my clothes on the street-cars."

"Dan ought to get you a span," Jefferson agreed readily. "I am always hearing he's a dog-gone good lawyer. . . . He isn't mean, is he, Susanna?"

She was a trifle shocked at this direct appeal to disloyalty, and she said automatically, "Oh, no!"

"Just New England, I reckon," her companion suggested. "Maybe you would have done better to have married me."

4

"Two hours about right?" Titus asked Susanna when they arrived at the cottage, and he told the man to come back in that time.

He unlocked the door with his latch-key. It was very still in the house, and Susanna called her mother, shrilly. There was no answer.

"Titus Jefferson," she said, "you knew all the time she wasn't here!"

"I wasn't sure. . . . She told me she was going over town, but I was afraid that she might have changed her mind, it's so cold." He grinned at Susanna as he spoke, like a naughty little boy.

"Well, I can't stay, of course." She turned toward the door, and Titus made no motion to detain her. He looked at her mournfully. "You make me feel darn dangerous," he said. "I don't see why you and I can't sit down in the parlor and talk. . . . We've done it often enough before."

"But that was before I was married."

"Do you mean to say Lunt would mind our talking together?"

"Of course he wouldn't mind that."

"Then come on in and sit down."

"No. I won't do that. . . . I'm starving! I'll cook something for our lunch;—it's too late to get home now."

Jefferson agreed rapturously, and the two went out to the small, badly equipped kitchen. "My goodness," Susanna murmured, "this does take me back!"

While Titus built up the fire she found bacon and eggs, and between them they managed to make a passable meal. Mrs. Wilcox came in to find them laughing over it, and was delighted to see her daughter. "Where's Daniel?" she asked, looking about for him.

When the sleigh came back, it did not seem possible to Susanna that she had been there two hours. "Will you come again?" Jefferson asked her, as he said good-by, and although she did not answer him, her smile committed her.

CHAPTER XV

BABIES

ANN'S third child, a daughter, was born in the following October, but it was an unimportant event compared to the fact that Susanna was "expecting" in December. Even Ann, who was superbly well before this baby was born, found that she thought of her friend with more concern than she did of herself.

Susanna was well enough, but as the months dragged on she became morbidly sensitive about her changed figure. She never spoke of the coming child: it was not until Daniel questioned her about it that, with floods of tears, she admitted her condition even to him, and with Ann she preserved a defensive silence until the end.

Her friend could see, when Susanna came to congratulate her, that she looked at the baby with mingled aversion and dread.

"How ugly they are!" she exclaimed, with no pretense of the polite admiration the occasion demanded.

She thought of her own baby mainly with resentment. She did not want a child. They had barely enough money as it was. . . . She wondered if she would ever be pretty again. . . . She thought of fat motherly women, and shuddered. . . . She missed gaiety. She moped without it, and she cried a great deal. Daniel was angelically patient with her; she had never dreamed that he had such great reserves of gen-

tleness. In the hot nights of the summer he would sit by her bed and fan her until she went to sleep, and when he found that she would not walk out on the streets where people might see her, he bought her a span of horses and a surrey, almost without any persuasion.

Mrs. Wilcox saw more of her daughter now than she had at any time since her marriage. She agreed with everything Susanna said, and she told her, as she sat sewing on voluminous baby dresses, what a hard time she had had when her children were born, and how difficult life had been when they were little. Daniel could generally tell, by his wife's deepened depression, when his mother-in-law had spent an afternoon with her.

Titus Jefferson had moved down to Lunt's old room, and automatically become Mrs. Wilcox's most important boarder. Often Susanna, wistfully watching from her window, would see his smart sleigh stop before her door, and her mother's slight shabby figure emerge from it. She heard a great deal about him, for Mrs. Wilcox entertained her daughter with tales of money he lost or won on horses and cards, and of other dissipations, vague, but curiously believable. Titus seemed to Susanna to be an extraordinary masculine creature. She envied him even the freedom of his excesses.

On Thanksgiving morning Daniel went up to his wife's room after breakfast. She looked very pretty lying in bed, with her hair loose about her face.

"I'm sorry," he said. "I shall have to go down to the office for a while, but I'll be home in time for the turkey!"

"The office,—to-day!" Susanna commented sharply. She did not care particularly, but she was not in a mood to let a grievance pass.

"Darling, I wouldn't go if it were not necessary: I am to be in court on Monday, and I have some work I must do."

"Well," said his wife, "I hope you charge a whacking fee. . . . Is there anything in the paper?"

"No,—nothing important. . . . They say Weston is due to arrive about noon."

"Imagine walking all the way from Maine! Mother says Titus Jefferson bet a great amount of money on him. . . . I wish I could see him! He is going to have a reception at the opera-house to-night, and illustrate the way he walks on the stage."

Daniel shrugged. "I can't imagine a drearier form of entertainment."

The corners of Susanna's mouth turned ominously downward. She cared nothing about Weston; but she wanted to be pitied for missing another festivity. "I have half a mind to drive out and catch a glimpse of him," she said mutinously.

"I wouldn't," Daniel advised. "It's a cold day, and he is coming in on the old Corduroy road. It would be rough going."

"I'm sick of taking care of myself."

"It won't be long now, darling. Only another month."

Another month? What did a man know of the length a month could stretch to, even when the end was to be dreaded,—to be feared?

Daniel kissed her and went away, leaving his newspaper with her. Idly, luxuriating in self-pity, she read the trivial story of the pedestrian's arrival, and after a while she began to think seriously of driving out to meet him. . . . If the plan had no other merit, it would agitate Daniel, and it was something to do. She dressed, and ordered the surrey. . . . It was unexpectedly cold out-of-doors, but she drove farther than she had intended when she left home; even when they left the good pavement behind them, she kept stubbornly on.

After a long time a little crowd came into view.

"That's him," the hired man told her, and in a few moments she was staring at a commonplace man who walked steadily along in a group of admiring people. He was shabby, dust gray, and humiliatingly uninteresting.

By the time they reached home, Susanna was half frozen, and thoroughly miserable. The man looked frightened as he helped her out of the surrey; she was so stiff with cold that she could barely walk, but she wished he wouldn't look at her in that fashion; it made her feel frightened, too.

2

When Daniel came home he found her huddled in bed, crying. He could get no intelligible explanation from her, but she said decidedly that she did not want the doctor. He was thoroughly alarmed, and, having nothing better to do, he sent the surrey for Ann. Susanna cried herself to sleep after a while, but her husband did not leave her through the long hours it took to send across the city for aid.

Ann arrived with her own two-months-old baby in her arms. "Don't worry," she told Daniel heartenningly. "Just take care of little Annabel.—It's time you learned how!—I'll go to Susanna."

Daniel sat down with the wide-eyed baby. . . . Its head wabbled terrifyingly, and he put a timid hand behind it. . . . Its eyes looked at him vacantly, and its feet kicked against him with endearing feebleness. . . . He put one large coarse finger in its tiny hand, which clutched it with surprising alacrity. . . . Suddenly it doubled up alarmingly, and something resembling a frown distorted its absurd face. . . . He was afraid that it was going to cry! He wondered what Ann would say to him if it did, and he clucked at it ridiculously. All at once it straightened out again, and

a vague smile spread over its face. . . . Daniel's relief was intense. He found himself indulging in unmanly tenderness for this atom he held. He thought of his own child, with humble delight.

Up-stairs Ann found Susanna awake. "Oh, Ann, I'm glad you've come!" she cried on seeing her friend. "Tell me it isn't very bad!"

It was not long after that when screams rang through the cottage. They drove Daniel out-of-doors. He paced up and down the walk eternally. . . . It had been hours since he had brought the doctor and the monthly nurse. . . . Now and then Ann came down to reassure him. It was a perfectly normal case, she said, and he mustn't mind screams; they were merely a matter of temperament.

The baby was born in the pale early dawn. It was five weeks too early, and it was incredibly tiny; Ann thought that she had never seen anything so exquisite as its hands and feet. Daniel came in just before the end; he met Susanna's accusing look with a hang-dog air, but when it was over, and she lay quiet at last, he hung above the baby in a passion of relief. It was a girl, and he was loyally glad of it.

When she was bathed, and rolled in woolen blankets, the doctor turned to him. "We'll have luck to pull her through," he said bluntly.

Daniel staggered a little, under this blow. He had thought all the horror was over. "You'd better have a drink," his friend the doctor suggested.

Lunt shook his head. "I'll just sit by the baby," he said. He could see nothing of her but the top of her head, covered with a dark fuzz, and the slight mound of her body, buried in blankets.

She lived for two days, so that hope was possible, and then, while she was asleep, she quietly ceased to breathe. Her father was watching her at the time, and he did not even know it. He was amazed at the depth

of his grief: it was not disappointment which consumed him, or merely sorrow: he felt, with her death, that his future died, also.

As for Susanna, she wept and wept. She had very little feeling for the baby until she saw her, but after that she was in love with her, and she was broken-hearted at losing her.

"You mustn't cry any more, Mrs. Lunt," the doctor said to her one day. "You are a young woman. You will, in all probability, have other babies,—a large family."

Susanna looked at him round-eyed over her sheets. Did he think she would go through that again? "No, never," she said firmly, and tears ran down her white cheeks at the pity of it.

Her husband was bound to her anew because of her grief; at times he thought that he had never been so fond of her, and during her saddened convalescence, when she was touchingly dependent upon him, he read aloud to her in the evenings from romances by Dickens or Thackeray or Walter Scott. He often brought delicacies home with him to tempt her appetite,—Spanish oranges, or a pint of caterer's ice-cream,—and flowers from the new hothouse in which they grew all through the winter. His esthetic sense delighted in the picture she made, sitting pallid and exquisite in her big white bed, her hands full of pale pink roses.

On Christmas Day he took some of them out to the cemetery where the baby had been buried; the tiny mound was almost indiscernible under the snow. He told Susanna about it when he came home, and she, who was only just up, wept in his arms. . . . Afterward he thought that in that moment they two were spiritually closer than at any other time in all their life together:—much closer than when, earlier in the day, he had given her the coveted ear-rings.

3

Susanna began seeing people shortly after that. She was prettier than ever, with an added appeal of delicacy to her good looks, and wistfulness to her charm. When he came home in the afternoon Daniel usually found her talking to friends before his library fire. Titus was there oftener than any one else, and it seemed to Lunt that his extravagant humor was exactly what Susanna wanted to set her up. The first time he heard her laugh after the death of the baby, was at one of Jefferson's antic jokes.

When she began to go about again, she formed a filial habit of going to see Mrs. Wilcox, who was enchanted at her devotion, and thought nothing of the coincidence that her lodger was invariably at home on the days when her daughter came. It was, as a matter of fact, sometimes convenient to turn Susanna over to Titus, for she had her work to do, and she would hear their laughter while she made beds, or cleared the dining-room table. She would have been the last person to have suspected anything wrong, and it relieved her mind considerably to have Jefferson take her daughter home to the north side, when her visit was over. She said to herself that she knew Susanna was safe, then.

CHAPTER XVI

ONE MAN'S MEAT

If any one had asked Peter why he was a Republican, he would undoubtedly have instanced windy national issues, but as a matter of fact, the two things which vitally interested him and made him cleave, heart and soul, to the Republican Party, were its high tariff on iron and steel, and its policy of railroad building.

As he cheerfully raised the price of his products behind a tariff wall, he became increasingly enraged at the idea of an opposing party questioning the advisability of shutting off English competition. He was almost abusive about it. His ideal for the West was a complete network of iron rails over the whole vast place, and he resented criticism of the government's grant of twenty sections of land for each mile of new track. He thought that little enough reward for such initiative, and was entirely in favor of additional government loans to the railroads. He could think of no more satisfactory way in which the taxpayers' money might be spent.

The unravished West lay very close to Chicago of the sixties. Indians yet lived near enough to be a usual sight on the city streets: they came into town to sell game, or to beg a meal or a drink. There was nothing fierce about these broken-spirited redskins who dwelt upon the fringes of civilization, but farther on, along the line of the Union Pacific, now working west-

ward far beyond Omaha, there were other savages, with skins no redder, who were continually molesting isolated construction camps, and much of the railroad building was carried on under army protection. The threat of a massacre was always in the air.

Peter and the friends he met at a recently started men's club, were agreed that the only good Indian was a dead Indian. They were all of them devout enough churchmen, but they were as one in feeling that the taming of the redskin was more than the Christian religion could hope to accomplish, and they put their faith in straight shooting rather than in straight talking. The West was theirs. Anything which interfered with their enjoyment of it must go.

They talked large talk of yoking the continent, and of developing the country. They became quite intoxicated upon their own eloquence; they believed, those church-going buccaneers of the General Grant period, that they were harbingers of sweetness and light: even to one another they orated grandiloquently of themselves as apostles of civilization, and they always shut the door before settling down to a discussion of what there was in it for them.

There was a great deal in it for Peter. When, in order to build a tube mill, the Smith and Jefferson Iron Company put out a second issue of stock, Titus saw to it that certain officials connected with the purchasing departments of the new roads received shares, to be paid for by the dividends. "It pays to let people feel that they are making money when they give you an order," he told his partner, and events proved him to be right, for these new stockholders turned a flood of business his way.

Peter used to stand before his furnace when the molten metal gushed forth, and ran, spitting fire and shining, into the sow and pig molds dug in the sand floor before it. He had an extraordinary sense of being

a creator; looking at it, he felt like God. He was supremely content except for one thing: he was eaten up by a desire to make steel.

2

It was about this time that he first heard the name Vanderbilt mentioned in connection with railroad building. One day Mr. Baker brought a stranger into the office, but Peter had no idea what he was entertaining unawares when he took the two men out into the shop to show them his rolling equipment.

"Ever think of trying steel?" Vanderbilt asked him, as they watched the iron rails go through.

"Yes. I have ordered a Kelly Converter—Bessemer they call 'em in England—to experiment with, and I've picked up an old engine from a Mississippi River boat which will do well enough to blow the blasts with for a while, anyway."

Josephus Baker smiled a commiserating smile. "Smith will never be satisfied that there is nothing in steel until he has tried his hand at it," he said.

This aroused Peter. "If the English can make steel rails, I don't see why we can't," he returned belligerently. "It riles me to have British drummers taking orders for them in this country."

The stranger glanced quickly at the banker. "That is more than Carnegie would say," he told him.

"Who is he?" Peter demanded.

"Carnegie? He's a little Scotchman in Pittsburgh who makes axles and iron bridges. . . . He is just getting started on rails."

"It doesn't follow that a man who makes axles knows anything about rails, Mr. Vandergrift."

"Vanderbilt," the banker edged in, softly.

"I believe you're right, sir, and if you can make a serviceable steel rail, my road will give you an order."

Peter looked up, surprised. He had not realized that he was talking to a railroad man.

3

Ann was, in the meantime, completely unaware that Peter dreamed dreams of revolutionizing the iron industry. To her, he was merely an able, highly successful manufacturer, who showed disquieting signs of wanting too much money. She could not persuade herself that riches were, in themselves, a worthy goal, and Peter jealously hid from her and from the rest of his world the fact that something deeper even than his desire for success was driving him on. He was much too self-conscious to admit that his imagination had been projecting itself into the future during the time he had been occupied in building up his business, and because she did not suspect this, his wife thought of him with that slight tinge of contempt which the pure idealist has for the doer.

His point of view distressed her, also. For the first time in the United States, the question of curbing the privileges of corporations became a vital issue, and to Peter this was not less than sacrilege. The people of the country were becoming alarmed at the railroad situation: charges of stock-watering were continually made, and the farmers in the West complained bitterly of high freight rates, the result of secret arrangements between the roads. The legislatures of several western states passed minimum freight laws, and bills to control transportation within their borders.

Peter was violently opposed to legislation of this sort, and grew red-faced and abusive in discussing it. "It's unconstitutional!" he would declare. "Unconstitutional and dangerous!" His intolerance very nearly drove Ann into the other camp.

It was a period of family life, and notwithstanding

the fact that the young Smiths took an active part in the social affairs of the city, there remained a large majority of evenings upon which they stayed at home. In the winter they sat before a coal fire in the shallow back parlor grate, and Peter would read aloud while Ann did the family mending. Sometimes they played a conjugal game of cribbage. In summer they sat out upon the front steps; every fair night, Hannah, the second girl, spread a rug outside as a matter of routine, and friends would often join them in that out-of-door drawing-room. If alone, they went to bed by nine o'clock, as Peter was an early riser. He made it a point always to reach the plant with the first of his employees.

For a year he stood among his workmen and developed the process of making steel inch by inch in his shop, and at the end of that time he knew something about it. It was his pride that none of his foreman could beat him in watching for the flicker of the flame which told the early manufacturer the moment to stop the process: he knew the soul satisfying eminence of the expert by the time he began to manufacture steel commercially.

Titus was all this time devoured by restlessness. The daily grind of manufacturing wore upon his nerves, and, always a gambler, he turned to speculation for relief. Mining stocks were running wild. The late sixties were years of bonanza in Nevada holdings; the Comstock lode development was accompanied by frantic buying, and the fluctuations in values were tremendous. Titus bought gaily and wildly. In April he would, perhaps, pay a thousand dollars a share for stock that he sold out in December for thirty, or it might be the other way, as like as not. He did not stay in anything long; quick transfers, eager belief and complete disillusionment marked his system, and, on the whole, luck befriended him. He did not pay too dearly for his excitement.

Peter remained very cold to his partner's successive enthusiasms: he was never tempted to invest in the "Wild Cat," or the "Old Girl," or the "Wake up Jack." Jeff, his mind full of "strikes," and claims, and quartz veins, was irritated to the point of fury by this indifference. He told Ann, glumly, that her husband had no imagination.

"Some of these days," he said to his partner, "I'll light out for the West!"

Peter never took him seriously. It was impossible for him to believe that any one could find the iron business dull, but Titus finally convinced him. He burst into the office one day, and slammed the door behind him. "I'm off!" he announced.

"Off?"

"Yes. I'm through."

"What do you mean?"

"Just what I say. . . . I'm through with the iron business. . . . Finished. . . . Played out. . . . Done."

"My boy, you're drunk!"

"And why not?" Titus demanded, bending over until his flushed face was on a level with Peter's. "Why not? As a matter of fact, I haven't had a drop, but I'm sick of thinking I'll be fired if I have whisky on my breath! I might as well be married. . . . I'm sick of this damned place, too!"

Peter pushed his chair back, at that, dismayed. "You don't mean you are sick of the plant?"

"I mean just that. I'm not like you;—I wasn't made to do the same thing over and over again, day after day. I'm through, I tell you. I'm going out west. I'm going to Nevada."

Peter got slowly to his feet. "You're crazy."

"Maybe. . . . I'm off to-night."

"Are you going to leave me flat,—like that?"

Titus nodded. "I never stuck to any man so long before," he conceded.

"You'll come back. You won't find anything else as good as this business."

"Do you want to buy my stock?"

"Do you want to sell it?"

Jeff nodded. "I'll take a hundred dollars a share."

"It's worth more than that."

"Not to me. . . . Can you raise it, boy? If not, I'll take less."

"Baker will let me have the money, I think. The stock is good security."

"Then that's settled." Titus turned toward the door.

Peter strode after him, and laid a hand on his sleeve. "Wait," he urged. "I'll quit early, and we will go out to see Annie and the children. You can't leave without saying good-by to them."

The color rushed into Titus Jefferson's face. "I have an engagement," he said, "but I'll come in this evening. I'll bring my stock certificates with me."

Peter opened his lips, and closed them. Ann had told him gossip she had heard. . . . Perhaps it was as well that Titus was going away. He stood by the window until his friend had climbed into his buggy, and driven off through the gates of the works. A man of few personal friendships, he felt inexpressibly lonely and deserted.

4

Titus Jefferson drove north; he was late, and he let his swift horse out; he was going to the new waterworks tower to meet Susanna, and he was both impatient and reluctant to see her. In flashes he thought of her with tenderness, with imperative desire, and with something of fear. . . . As he climbed the winding steps he found himself breathless, but it was emotion rather than exertion which winded him.

She was there ahead of him. He could see the line

of her slender waist above her great skirt, as he neared the top of the steps. She was leaning against a window-frame, looking pensively out over the city. She had been discreetly veiled, but she had thrown her dark drapery back, and her clear profile was outlined against it. Something in her look touched Titus unexpectedly: he felt a lump in his throat as he came toward her. She turned and looked at him gravely, with pride and shame warring in her eyes.

Titus glanced swiftly about him: they were alone, and striding over to Susanna, he took her in his arms. She held back for an instant, and then clung to him, burying her face in his shoulder.

"Honey!" he said softly to her, over and over.

"You are late. I thought you didn't want to come!" she whispered brokenly.

"I want to all the time. . . . That's the trouble."

She smiled, and lifted her head to meet his ardent look. He promptly bent and kissed her, and then held her off, defensively.

"See here, young lady,—this won't do!"

"Are you going to be moral?"

"No,—but I hope I'm going to be sensible. . . . It isn't easy, alone with you like this."

"Then don't be," she urged, smiling.

"Susanna,—how long do you think we can go on this way? We'll be found out, my girl."

She drew off. "You are singing a different tune."

"Yes,—I am. I've been doing a lot of thinking, too. . . . Do you believe we can see anything of each other in a damned gossipy place like Chicago, and not have a dozen old hens talking?"

"We can be careful."

"I'm not a careful man, Susanna; I can't be discreet. It isn't in me. . . . And I can't let you alone, either."

"I don't want you to do that."

"There we are. When you talk to me like that you

make me perfectly reckless." Titus looked down at her. Her lifted face was very lovely, and there was an expression on it which he would have bet his last dollar no other man had ever seen. "I'm going away," he said.

"No!"

"Yes. I am. To-night."

"I'm going with you."

"No.—I'm going out west. I'm going prospecting."

"When are you coming back?"

"As soon as I can, honey. . . . I've been thinking. . . . I'm putting everything on this one throw. If I strike it, I'll come back and take you away,—to Europe, maybe."

"Take me now, Titus!"

"No. . . . I'd like to,—but I've got some sense. You'd hate living in a prospector's cabin and cooking his grub,—and if I stand a chance to make a success I've got to be free. . . . You're an expensive proposition, my dear! I'd be afraid of you unless I had a world of money."

It had been Jefferson's intention to say good-by on the top of the water-tower, but their privacy was invaded by investigating small boys, and they were driven down. In the dusk of the stairway he pressed close to Susanna, and kissed her furtively and unsatisfactorily. "Remember," he whispered, "you are going to marry me, some day."

She held him back for a moment. "How can I," she asked, "when I am married to Daniel?"

Titus chuckled. "Ever hear of divorce?"

She recoiled at that. "Divorce? But, Titus, nice people don't get divorces."

He kissed her again slowly. It was a reminiscent kiss. "Perhaps we're not nice people," he suggested, as he released her.

They emerged, flushed and miserable, from the

doorway. It was terrible to part in that fashion, formally, on the public street, and they lovers.

"Can't we meet again?" Susanna whispered. "At mother's? Anywhere? I'll manage to get away."

Titus shook his head. "It wouldn't be any easier." He held out his hand. "Good-by."

In an instant he was unfastening his horse: Susanna could barely see him, because of the tears in her eyes. She blinked them angrily away. He was driving off without another look at her. He was gone.

CHAPTER XVII

THE GREAT FIRE

On a Sunday night not long after Titus Jefferson's departure, Ann and Peter came out from evening service at church to hear a sudden and startling clamor of bells.

"There's a big fire over town!" a passer-by shouted.

Peter seized Ann's arm, and dragged her away. At the corner a glare in the sky told him where the fire was, and he drew a breath of relief. "A long way from the plant!" he exclaimed, but added, with a drop in his voice, "There's a hell of a wind blowing!"

"You don't need to swear about it, Peter,—just having been to church, too."

"It must be fully a mile away."

"Then why do you hurry me so?"

"I'm going down to the plant."

Ann's protest at that was purely conjugal. She would have liked to go herself,—to see the red terror near at hand. "Listen to the bells!" she said. There was an increased clamor every moment.

Peter harnessed his mare himself; the hired man was too slow for him. As he drove swiftly toward it he realized grimly that he had never seen a fire of this size before. . . . Ahead of him the night was filled with garish light, and black clouds streamed like sinister banners over the burning district. . . . There was a roar in the night, as he came closer; he could

barely hear the alarm bells above it. . . . A great gale was blowing: Peter thought that he had never known the wind to blow harder. It had not rained in weeks: the wooden city was like so much tinder.

The fire was nearer the Smith and Jefferson works than he had thought, and he lashed his mare savagely. In a moment she was out of control. She was running away, and the high buggy was careening drunkenly over the rough pavement. . . . He came abreast of the fire, and snatched glances toward it. Only a confused glow, and smoke,—then finally, a leaping tongue of flame, fierce and beautiful against the sky.

Peter was cursing aloud as he galloped on, past houses dark and apparently unawakened, past groups of excited people, past churches in whose high steeples alarm bells were ringing. When he reached the neighborhood of his works, he sawed his mare's mouth unmercifully, and pulled her down. He swung around the corner on two wheels.

The night was full of tiny yellow sparks. Peter realized that they must be blowing over his yard. . . . The air was heavy with smoke. . . . A flaming brand carried high on the torrent of the wind dropped in a fiery curve, ahead of him. . . . Peter fell to cursing again. The thing was perilously close.

The gate of the Smith and Jefferson yard was swinging wide, and Peter called for the watchman as he turned in. A man came running toward him through the firelit dusk.

"Hold her, Tim!" Peter shouted, and leaped from the buggy. It did not occur to him that Tim, his life in danger, might disregard the order.

He ran over to the stack and began to climb the ladder which ran up the side: he wanted to see what his chances were. When his head poked over the top of the stack a hot wind swept across it, and he ducked, involuntarily: he realized, then, that only a miracle

could save the plant. . . . There was an inferno of fire to the south of him. . . . There would be no miracle, damn it. . . . He slid rapidly down the ladder, and ran as fast as he could over to the office building.

The record of his whole business life was in the drawers of his desk. . . . Contracts and books showing the money due him were in the safe by the window: he knelt down before it, and began twirling the combination. When he had it open he emptied a desk drawer, and began putting papers into it. When he took his first load out, he realized that the fire was alarmingly nearer: its roar filled the mill yard with terror. The mare was rearing and plunging; she gave Tim all he wanted to hold her.

Peter went back for a second drawer-full. On his way out again, he remembered his contract for fire insurance. It took him some time to find it, as the gas went out suddenly while he was looking, and he was obliged to continue his search by the light of matches which he feverishly struck. . . . Out in the yard Tim was calling desperately. The office building was on fire. Flames ran like spray along the edge of the shingle roof, and the high wooden fence was all ablaze.

Peter sprang into the buggy, and the terrified mare leaped wildly forward. "Get in!" he shouted, and Tim tumbled after him, scattering papers as he did so.

"Damn!" Peter muttered, between his teeth.

The gate was burning, its high frame a menace, but they bolted through it unharmed. Tim was audibly thanking the saints for his escape, but Peter was silent as he steadied his terrified mare. At the corner he looked back; the roof of the office building was burning freely, and wooden framework of the windows in the rail mill was blazing. He had never, in all his life, been so dumfounded.

2

At first no alarm was felt on the north side of the river, and Susanna had quite a large group of people watching the spectacle from her front porch. Under her tall trees the distant fire had an added brightness. It was rather a gay crowd, considering the occasion.

"Pity you don't play the fiddle, Mrs. Lunt," one of the men ventured, but no one took up his allusion, and he subsided.

Daniel was not there, and his wife explained his absence somewhat tartly. "He drove off in the surrey to see if Peter Smith was being burned out. I wish he thought half as much of me as he does of Peter."

A few ultracautious men who had down-town offices left early, but the others went out in the pantry later on and made lemonade, while the ladies found cakes. It was hungry work, watching the fire.

3

From the bridge Daniel could see that the whole quarter where the Smith and Jefferson plant stood was doomed. It was already a riot of flames.

To the south the next bridge was burning, and the lumber yards beyond it were ablaze. The fire was in the city. Until that moment it had not occurred to Daniel that the business section might be destroyed, and for the first time he thought of his office, and of important papers he kept there. He turned reluctantly, for he was anxious about Peter, and drove back the way he had come.

He found that confusion had already reached the business district. People were crowding into the streets from hotels; some of them dragged trunks behind them; some were only partly dressed. A man rushed out and offered Daniel a fantastic price to take him

and a great box to safety. Every one was beginning to realize the incredible swiftness of the fire.

Daniel drove his horses into an alley near his office, and hitched them, before he made his way up-stairs. His windows opened toward the flames, and for a moment, fascinated, he watched their great attack. They were still some distance away: he had plenty of time, but it was slow work deciding what was worth saving. He was a methodical man, and he tied the papers he meant to take away into neat bundles, which he bestowed about his person. This done, he heaped the pile of discarded documents into his waste-basket, stooping meticulously to collect some which had drifted under his desk, and he waited to tear into small bits papers of a private nature. The office was in its usual neat condition when he left it.

He was startled to see how near the fire had come. Smoke choked him as he unfastened his horses and sparks fell like rain all about him. . . . The streets were jammed with people trying to escape, and the sidewalk was full of things they had abandoned in their flight. Lunt put his foot through an oil painting which lay across his door-step, and stumbled over a high-chair on his way to the curb. . . . He came upon a woman with three children holding to her skirts, and took them into the surrey. . . . Farther on, an old man with a crutch was laboring to escape, and Daniel added him to his load. He left them near the lake shore well to the north of the fire.

His front door was locked, and he pounded on it savagely. As he waited, he moved impatiently about, and kicked against a plate. Stooping, he picked it up; it was half filled with cakes, and with a swift imprecation he flung it out into the yard. The sound of its smash gave him a crazy satisfaction.

"Daniel! That's one of my set!"

He turned at the words to find Susanna in the door-

way. "I thought you would never come! Leaving me all alone, with sneak thieves everywhere!"

"I'm afraid the north side is going. . . . We had better pack what we can."

"I've begun to get my clothes together."

As he followed his wife up-stairs, Daniel marveled at her coolness. Her room overflowed with finery, and already a trunk which she had dragged in was filled.

"You can't take all that truck," he said.

At these words, her eyes filled with tears. "I can't leave my things!"

"Oh—very well." He helped her cram her silken fabrics in, and dragged the trunk to the stairs. He bumped it roughly down, and lifted it into the back of the surrey. The fire was nearer.

He ran back into the house. Susanna was still packing: he was alone, and it was very still. . . . He was sorry to lose his books. . . . He put a daguerreotype of his mother in his pocket, and took his overcoat from the hat-rack by the door; he could think of nothing further. . . . He had lived in this place for four years, and yet he had little regret. "Love's young dream," he said cynically, aloud in the empty house, before he left it to its destruction.

Susanna had filled the surrey with bundles and packages. As he wedged himself into the front seat Daniel could see that they had lingered too long. Sparks rained all about them. The grass flared where they fell, and the dry leaves in the trees caught, burning in great sprays of flame, lovely to see. The roar of the fire was on the heels of countless fugitives, and panic was in the air.

People were flocking to the lake for safety, and Susanna, terrified, implored Daniel to follow them, but he was confident that he could keep ahead of the fire, and drove to the north. Confusion owned the streets. Men, women and children all struggled in them in a

wild panic to escape. Wagon-loads of furniture plowed through the crowd; here one had taken fire and had been abandoned by its driver; there one had upset, and its load blocked the way. People were continually tumbling over things that had been dropped in flight. It was like a nightmare.

Daniel paused to take up a woman with a baby clasped in her arms. . . . Farther on, a little girl was standing at the side of the street, a huge box beside her. Tears were streaming down her face, and when he caught sight of her, Daniel stopped again.

"We haven't room for any one else," Susanna protested.

"Come on!" he called to the child.

She started to obey him, and then paused. "Can I bring my puppies?"

"Certainly not," Susanna cried sharply, and the little girl turned back. "You'll be burned up!" she shouted, moved by this devotion.

Daniel gave his wife the reins, and sprang over the wheel. The child looked confidently up at him. "They're too little to take care of themselves," she said.

Lunt looked into the box to see six sprawling puppies. He took it up without further ado, and the child ran joyfully over to the surrey.

"There isn't room for all of us," she complained, pausing on the step.

Daniel put the box down, and taking hold of Susanna's trunk, he jerked it out into the street.

"Daniel Lunt! My brocade is in that trunk, and my red poplin!"

He laughed. "Get in," he told the little girl, and when she had obeyed him, he set her box where the trunk had stood.

"I'm sorry," he told Susanna, as he put his foot on the hub of the wheel, and leaped in beside her.

She looked at him angrily. "Sorry?" she echoed shrilly. She looked back at her abandoned trunk. Tears were running down her cheeks. "I suppose you'll put me out, next."

She hated Daniel, as he drove her toward safety, and as for him, he was filled with a crazy satisfaction in his Quixotic act.

CHAPTER XVIII

REFUGEES

In later life it always seemed a strange thing to Ann that she was able to recall so few thrilling experiences of the fire, but as a matter of fact, the only thing she remembered with any distinctness was her anxiety about Peter during his long absence, and her relief when he came back to her. She never forgot that she had felt quite weak with happiness at seeing him come into the house. The fact that the works had been destroyed seemed to her, in that moment of reunion, entirely unimportant.

Union Park was beyond the line of the fire, and was crowded with refugees. The houses facing the little enclosure were filled with them, and Nora cooked breakfast for a multitude. Clothes became an acute problem, for people had fled only half-dressed, and Ann gave away every serviceable garment in the house which was not in actual use. Little Hendricks was in tears in the nursery because of the loss of his new winter coat.

Sick people were carried into her house, and she had no medicines—she had even had no water since the pumping station had burned the night before. A baby had been born in the park during the night: Ann found clothes for it, and milk flavored with Peter's whisky for the mother. She spent what money she had in the house on supplies. Already they were hard to get, but she was able to buy candles, coffee and bacon.

A man came down the street peddling water from the muddy Desplaines, and she filled all the receptacles in the house from his leaking barrel. Noon came with incredible speed.

All night his last glimpse of the Smith and Jefferson plant had remained with Peter. . . . When he closed his eyes, he could see the delicate flicker of fire along the edge of the office roof. . . . With the earliest dawn, he slipped out of the house to the barn, and the sun had not yet risen when he drove off down the street.

The destroyed city was an appalling thing to face. It was worse, in the daylight, than it had been the night before, for now everything was gone, wiped out, like black magic, in the twinkling of an eye. In the place of the busy town there was, literally, nothing. . . . Peter could look off across a great plain of burning debris clear to the lake. . . . The sun came up over its smoky rim in a riotous yellow glory: it looked like a burnished copper plate. . . . Here and there masonry ruins reared up, blackened and spectacular. Peter could not recognize anything; he had no bearings; only the gash cut by the river orientated him, but that, too, was strange, for in place of the high elevators which yesterday had stood along its banks, sprawling piles of grain were burning briskly. Where the coal yards had been a thick smoke hung low over wicked green and yellow flames. . . . To the north the fire still raged, under billows of heavy smoke which was borne on the gale far out over the lake.

The fire had licked the neighborhood of the plant clean. The buildings were reduced to smoking rubble, and the wooden block pavement was burned to the earth beneath it. Where cars had run the iron track was twisted into great loops: Peter was obliged to hitch his mare at some distance away, and pick a path through the wreckage on foot. He had difficulty in finding his

way, guided only by an occasional angular, featureless piece of masonry,—a doorway which led nowhere,—a window which opened from nothing. He was profoundly depressed.

The Smith and Jefferson plant was in ruins: the only thing that remained of the substantial buildings were smoking piles of bricks. . . . His life seemed to Peter to be shattered with that of his mill, but after a moment's grim contemplation he was struck with something not unrelated to hope. Although the walls had gone down in the fire, warping and crushing the plant which they were designed to shelter, the blast furnace, standing in the open, had come through with but partial damage, and Peter thought that it might be possible to salvage this most important part of his works.

He was in a fever to get started again, but there was nothing he could do while a hundred minor fires were burning themselves out in his yard. He could not, however, bear to leave the scene of his desolation, and he walked about, instinctively planning new and better buildings.

2

Peter found an express wagon before his house when he reached home, and from its covered interior Mrs. Baker was leaning an anguished face. Her husband was seated on a trunk in the body of the wagon: he was, all things considered, surprisingly cheerful.

"I have something here I wish you'd lend me a hand with."

Peter found the trunk surprisingly heavy, but when the expressman had gone, Mr. Baker turned to him jubilantly. "I have two hundred thousand dollars in paper money in that trunk!" he whispered proudly.

"Lord! I hope no one knows it!"

"The bank will have something to open up on, at any rate."

Peter was delighted with his spirit. They found Brady and his family domiciled on the unused fourth floor, and the man helped him carry the trunk to a remote closet. . . . Ann was glad to see the banker and his wife: they lived near Susanna, and the fact that they had escaped made her hope for her other friends. No one had seen or heard of them, however, and the town was full of appalling rumors.

Panic possessed every one. Food was hard to find, and candles and water were almost unobtainable. Ann laid in what supplies she could, but it was impossible to feed all the people who applied. In addition to the banker and his wife and Brady's family, she had living in her basement innumerable relations of Nora, whose existence she had never suspected. Even the barn had been turned into a dwelling: the hired man's sister's family was camping out there. These people had to be fed, and she was forced to limit her outside aid to the sick or aged.

When night came, the city was in complete darkness. Only the silent fires in cellars whose owners had been so unfortunately foresighted as to lay in their winter's supply of coal glowed red in the dark. Rumor of thieves added to the general terror, and Peter organized the men in his neighborhood into patrol groups. All night long the reassuring sound of their footsteps could be heard on the resounding boards of the sidewalks.

It was not until the afternoon of the second day that Susanna and Daniel finally appeared. Ann had gone over to the nearest church to aid in the distribution of relief, but Nora received them with noisy delight which brought Mrs. Baker down-stairs, dropping welcoming exclamations from every step. Susanna looked exhausted.

"This is the first time a roof has been over me!" she declared dramatically. "We haven't had any food,—decent food, that is,— and we've lost everything! Even my clothes are gone!"

"We've lost everything, too," Mrs. Baker chimed in, and Susanna, who felt her tragedy unique, looked at her inimically.

Nora broke in on their competitive recital: after all she had work to do. "Ye'd be th' better f'r a bit iv sleep, Mrs. Lunt," she said decidedly. "There's a bed ready in the nursery, an' I've hot water on me stove. I'll be bringin' ye up some milk toast, an' a cup of tea, an' ye'll soon be forgettin' y'r troubles, ma'am."

Susanna went obediently up the stairs. Often she paused to add to her tale of woe. She had the advantage of Mrs. Baker, whom steps rendered breathless.

Daniel went off in search of Ann, in spite of his wife's shrill warning from the landing that she would not want to see him until he had shaved. He shut the door behind him with an enormous sense of relief at being, for the moment at least, rid of Susanna. He felt bruised spiritually. . . . He wished that he might just walk off, and disappear. . . . His soul was much more tired than his body, weary as that was.

As he walked down the street he tried to convince himself that he was unfair; already, away from his wife, he was more charitable to her. . . . He told himself that she was not made for discomfort. . . . She was made for ease, and for frivolity. . . . To her a night under the stars had been tragedy, while other women camped near by had managed to be gay, notwithstanding their bad luck.

Leaning against the ill-fated box which held the puppies, sitting very still and cramped because the little girl's head was pillowed on his lap, Daniel had heard their occasional determined laughter, and had contrasted it grimly with his wife's fretful complaints.

. . . The child had been afraid of Susanna, but she had responded shyly to Lunt's grave politeness, and he thought of her now with wistful tenderness. He fancied that she had been sorry to leave him, when they ran into friends of her family. The woman with the baby had disappeared at the earliest opportunity, murmuring scared gratitude. Susanna had frozen her, of course.

He had time to think, sitting with that light head on his knees. . . . Now and then, with exquisite gentleness, he had touched the silky hair. . . . What if his baby had lived? Would that have made the difference in Susanna, or would she, too, have been sacrificed? It was, perhaps, as well for her that she had died, poor little perfect thing.

He couldn't get his mind off his sorry personal affairs. For some time things had been going badly with him and Susanna, but in spite of irritation, she had preserved a little of the glamour from the days when he had first loved her. . . . For one thing, he had never quite felt that she was wholly his: there had always been something more to desire—something which her graces and her coquetries seemed to promise, but which she never quite fulfilled. Her possibilities had tantalized him, but after the stark unveiling of the past twenty-four hours, he knew what it was that she held back. "She hates me," he kept saying to himself as he walked down the street, but the fact that overwhelmed him in this connection was his own indifference to it. . . . He realized that there was a worse tragedy than not being loved; it was to cease loving.

Lost in his gloomy thoughts, he did not see that a woman coming toward him was Ann until he heard her exclamation as she caught sight of him. He was tremendously and hearteningly glad to see her; the mere sight of her smile shining upon him dissipated all the black cloud of his unhappiness, and when she ran toward him,

both hands outstretched in welcome, he surprised himself and her by leaning over and kissing her. . . . They both laughed at that, mutually embarrassed. . . . He wasn't unhappy any more, and he was a little dizzy at the relief of it. . . . They walked down the street together, exchanging fragmentary news of the past eventful days. He reassured her as to Susanna's safety, and she told him what had happened to Peter. Daniel kept looking down at her; life with Susanna had taught him that she was dressed in very ordinary clothes, but he thought that she looked lovely. There was something vigorous about her which rested him, and her cheerfulness lifted his spirit.

When they reached home Lunt paused. He ran his eyes over Ann's housefront, and then they dropped on her. "God!" he said, "I'm glad you're all right!"

3

It was late afternoon when Susanna awoke. She lay for a time watching the shadows deepen in the corners of her room, and then, hearing a sound at the door, she called sharply, "Who is there?" and added, as an afterthought, and in honeyed guest's tones, "Come in!"

The door opened a very little way, and a small boy insinuated himself into the room. "Aren't you ever going to get up?" he demanded. "Nora says you'll make work, lying in bed."

"Mercy, Hendricks, what time is it?"

"It's most six."

Susanna dropped back into her pillows. "Is that all? . . . Come here and I'll tell you what happened to me."

The little boy ran over to her. The fire had made life as glorious as a continuous fairy-tale. "Was you burned?" he asked hopefully.

"My house was. . . . It's all gone."

"Well,—Mrs. Brady took her furniture and put it on a waggin, an' they all sat on it, an' it took fire, an' she put it out, an' the baby fell off, an' everything!" That, Hendricks thought, was a story worth the telling.

"I had to leave all my things behind me!"

"Well,—so did Mr. Crowe,—he's Nora's second cousin. He's a policeman, too. . . . He had to stay on his beat, till he was most burned up, 'n' he saved a lady,—'n' lots of little children,—'n' a cripple. . . . What's a cripple, Auntie Sue?"

His pretty visitor sat up, and reaching out, she patted his cheek with her soft hand. "Let's play a game," she suggested. "Let's see who can ask the most questions. Who sleeps in this bed, ordinarily?"

"Our nurse. That's the baby's bed, over there,—that crib,—an' me an' Peets sleeps in the nursery. . . . My mother says we'll all have to sleep in there to-night, to make room for you and Uncle Dan. Our nurse is awful mad."

"Wouldn't you like to sleep in here with me?"

Hendricks looked at her doubtfully. He liked pretty ladies, but he preferred those who treated him more casually than his Auntie Sue did. "I don't know's I would."

"I'll tell you about the fire," Susanna said mendaciously.

"Tell me now."

"No. . . . You run ask your mother to come here."

Hendricks hesitated: he hated to go on errands, but there was something compelling about Auntie Sue. "I won't run," he told her, capitulating.

Ann came up at once. "You poor dear!" she murmured, kissing Susanna's cheek.

"Oh, you don't know. . . . Some day I'll tell you. . . . The worst of it was Daniel."

"Daniel?"

"He was so silent,—so unsympathetic. . . . He was just like his dreadful old mother down in New Hampshire!"

"You must have imagined it."

Her guest shook her head violently. "No. . . . He was horrid. . . . Ann, couldn't I sleep here in this room,—with one of the children?"

"They can all tumble into the nursery, Susanna. You needn't worry."

"Don't you understand? I want to get away from Daniel for a while. . . . He'll be glad, too. Let me sleep here with the baby, and tuck him in somewhere else."

"The baby wakes up awfully early," Ann said lightly. The last thing she wanted to do was to discuss Susanna's conjugal relations.

"Let me try it to-night, anyway."

"Of course, if you wish it."

4

Down-stairs that evening Susanna was charmingly gay. She had brushed and mended the gown in which she made her escape, and she had curled her hair with her customary care. She looked extraordinarily fresh and pretty. Daniel and Ann both wondered at the apparent ease with which she cast aside her low spirits.

She made up to Peter when he came in. He was, Daniel grimly decided, dirtier than he had ever been in all his tidy professional life, but Susanna was apparently indifferent to it, and Peter, who had always liked her, became genial under her blandishments. Looking across the table at her with a cold lucidity, Daniel admitted that she was an extraordinarily attractive creature. . . . In addition to the attention she paid to her host, she was flirting openly and amusingly with old Mr. Baker; it was harmless enough; even his wife

could find nothing to take seriously, and she threw the magic of her quickening glance even at Peter's foreman. She made him choke once, over his coffee.

They all laughed more than they had at any time since the disaster, and toward the end of a somewhat chaotic supper Peter disappeared, to return with a bottle of the champagne which he had bought for Ann's evening reception. They drank it warm, to Ann's toast.

"The new Chicago!"

CHAPTER XIX

FALSE HOPES

Chicago recovered from tragedy with extraordinary resiliency: within a week after the fire started, banks and shops were opened in various temporary quarters, and the enormous task of clearing away the debris had begun. When lumber came into the city, building began with a rush. Optimism was in the air: people were extravagantly and hysterically cheerful, and the humblest citizen walked about among the ruins of the city animated by a conviction that it must rise again.

Business men all over the country extended generous credit to the fire sufferers. The company from which Peter bought his coke telegraphed: "Suppose you are burned out. Will fill any order you send." His ore people wired: "Order freely. Take your time in paying." The firm from which he ordered new equipment wrote: "We are glad to extend you credit. We want your trade." It was extraordinarily heartening, and he went to work clearing up his ruins with enthusiasm.

The fire insurance situation, however, was by no means so satisfactory, for an appalling number of companies failed under pressure of the calamity. Peter carried a two hundred thousand dollar policy on the Smith and Jefferson plant, on which Daniel Lunt, after much negotiation, was able to get eight thousand dollars in cash. Peter faced rebuilding with only his good will and this ridiculously inadequate sum of ready money.

He put a mortgage on the land and the partly destroyed furnace of the Smith and Jefferson Company, which enabled him to repair the stack and put up temporary buildings. When his new equipment arrived he had a shed ready in which to house it. Those were boom days in the rail industry, and Peter meant to lose no unnecessary time. Three months after the fire he was miraculously at work again, and even in that time of rapid recovery this was a feat. Peter Smith became known as an able man and a driver.

Brady, who worked with him, was proud of the exploits of his boss, and as he was an Irishman, no story lost in his telling. He made the curiously assorted company at Ann's supper table thrill with him at the spectacle of one dynamic little man matched against the worst nature could accomplish in the shape of a catastrophe.

Ann was amazed to see how tamely Peter submitted to this unveiling of his sacred business hours. He was even led on to talk himself of what he was doing, and the two office men listened to the tale of his struggle with almost as much interest as the three women, who hung on his words. Suddenly, life had swung back to pioneer conditions, and the man who accomplished physical feats was of greater importance than any number of bankers or lawyers.

Ann found herself flushing with pride as the tale of her husband's primitive struggle was unfolded. The fact that she was again in confidential relations with Peter made her happier, notwithstanding the discomforts of life in the ruined town, than she had been since his growing success had alienated him from her. Her old sense of companionship with him was restored. Housekeeping became a matter of makeshifts in a city suddenly deprived of all modern conveniences, and she was obliged to ask his advice about the most ordinary necessaries of living. She always found him vigorously

optimistic, as well as infinitely resourceful. After talking with him she was convinced that anything was possible. This was the Peter men knew, she thought, wistfully. It was no wonder there was nothing they would not do for him.

2

All through the months which he spent in her house, Daniel Lunt was a sympathetic observer of Ann's reawakening joy. She radiated happiness; one had only to look at her to recognize a supremely contented woman, and her lavish betrayal touched the defensive New Englander. To him there was something enchantingly warm and human in Ann's wish to share her husband's life completely, but he suspected that in this respect Peter and he had little in common. His friend seemed to Lunt to be too entirely centered on his work to be bothered about personal relations. Incredible as it seemed, the young lawyer observed a trace of timidity in Ann's manner toward him. She impressed him as living in fear of a rebuff, and he observed that she seldom asked her husband a direct question about his concerns.

It struck him as curious that Peter, who had, on occasion, such effective geniality, should be essentially secretive and aloof, while he, whose manner was so often repellent, should find life incomplete without intimate companionship. He wondered what Peter had done to have lavished upon him that for which he would, himself, have given so much. The answer was not difficult to find, and Lunt's dark cheek burned with the realization of it. His friend had had the good sense to fall in love with a superior woman.

He waited with some anxiety to see what Ann's fate would be when her husband was again involved in business complications, for he had observed that when

the supper table conversation touched on the more intricate phases of Peter's business life, he took on a reticence compared to which the proverbial clam was garrulous. There was something of the robber baron about Peter: he would not brook a curb to his independence. Arrogance was growing on him with success, and lesser men began to speak of him with respect not untinged with fear. Inside his works he maintained his paternal relations with the workmen, but they, too, treated him with deference. . . . It was this humility which he accepted from Ann. He did not even notice it, Lunt thought.

3

When the Smith and Jefferson Company was again in operation, Peter found his hands full. His makeshift plant was by no means satisfactory, and he lived in fear of accidents to his men. Materials were difficult to get, for relief shipments took precedence over everything else, and supplies necessary to the very life of his business were hung up indefinitely on side-tracks. He was consumed by anxiety over the non-arrivals of coke and ore, for he was in a feverish hurry; he wanted to make all the hay possible while the sun shone.

In December he was asked to become a director of the Chicago National Bank. He would, if he accepted, be the youngest bank director in town, but in spite of this allure he hesitated, for he had a suspicion that it might be wiser to concentrate on his own business. Finally, however, he yielded to Mr. Baker's flattering persuasions, as well as to a conviction that it might be convenient to be connected with the bank which carried so much of his paper.

He found directors' meetings unexpectedly pleasant, for once inside the bank nothing jarred him. The men seated about the long table in the committee room were all fellow-apostles of privilege, and shared his resent-

ment at any interference with business. After an hour or so in their company, he would emerge soothed, inflated and cocksure, to go home to his wife secure in an unchallenged conviction that he belonged to a superior group and sex.

Daniel had been right about Peter's expansive period: as his business became more complicated he grew less inclined to discuss it freely, especially with women, and Ann would sometimes discover the four men engaged in talk which died at her approach, frozen at Peter's sudden silence. Lunt found it painful to watch her happiness evaporate, and told Susanna he thought it was time they sought other quarters. "We might stay with your mother," he suggested.

Mrs. Wilcox had not been burned out, and as a result of the shortage of houses, she was renting her rooms at unprecedented prices. "Her house is full," Susanna protested.

"I will pay what she is getting, of course. . . . I think we have been here long enough."

"I suppose we would have to go before long, anyway,—now that Ann is going to have another baby."

"A—baby?"

"Yes, poor thing. . . . She pretends she is glad of it. . . . However, Mr. Baker tells me that Peter is certain to be a very rich man,—a millionaire, maybe."

"I doubt if that makes much difference to Ann."

Susanna stared at him. "She is a woman, isn't she?"

4

Daniel found himself unexpectedly moved when he took up his residence in the house where he had courted Susanna. The shabby place was filled with ghosts of a sweetly compliant girl, and he kept stumbling upon poignant reminders of sensations and hopes of that earlier day. . . . He tried to tell Susanna about it,

but with meager success, although they patched up a reconciliation of sorts. Mrs. Wilcox rented him the second floor of the cottage, and he established his wife in the front chamber where he had once lived, and turned the smaller room in the rear into a combination bedroom and office. . . . He made a great effort to be gentle with Susanna: he struggled against a tendency toward moroseness, and did his best to be gay when he was with her. Try as he might to be amusing, however, he could never stimulate her beyond a wan smile, notwithstanding the fact that people often spoke of him as a brilliant talker.

Susanna found life appallingly dreary. The winter following the fire was a stern and pioneer thing: Chicago was like a mining town; wooden shacks lined the streets, and all the little elegancies in which she delighted were unobtainable. For months following the catastrophe there was no social life: there were no dinner parties, and no evening receptions; there was no fabric of gaiety into which might be woven harmless but pleasant association with members of the opposite sex. . . . In her idleness Susanna thought about Titus much of the time. . . . She, too, had memories in the little house,—memories of her reckless lover. . . . She had not heard a word from him since his abrupt departure; she did not know whether he were alive or dead, but he lived in her recollection with extraordinary vividness.

In comparison with his large gestures, she found Daniel's reticence finicky. His delicacy affronted her as Jefferson's grossness never had: there was no sweep to his feeling in which she might lose herself,—no flood into which she might plunge headlong. She lacked the courage to oppose him, so she settled down to dreary acquiescence to his demands. . . . As time went on they became less, for Daniel shortly abandoned expectation of a better relationship. The gay little ghost from

the past who had temporarily stimulated his hope was replaced by the sad reality of a discontented, listless woman. It was only when boxes came containing clothes ordered from New York that Susanna showed any signs of the valiant gaiety with which she had first won Daniel, and occasionally, when they were unwontedly expensive, she put on a softer manner for a day or two.

Lunt became very moody, and he took on the abstracted look of a person absorbed in his own unhappiness. The fire brought litigation in its wake, and he was working hard. Night after night found him at the desk in his room; when the fire in the hot air furnace died down, and it grew cold, he wrapped a rug about his thin legs and blew on his fingers to warm them. Sometimes he would take a drink of Bourbon to put heart into him,—rarely, at first, but oftener as the winter wore on.

Daniel's mother died not long after they had established themselves with Mrs. Wilcox, and he was more saddened by it than seemed reasonable to his wife, who had always cordially disliked her mother-in-law.

She said to Mrs. Wilcox, "He hasn't seen her for years, and goodness knows how much money he has had to spend on her."

She was surprised to hear that he intended to go on for the funeral, but the idea of a trip appealed favorably to her.

"I can be ready in time for the train," she told him.

"Ready for what?"

"To go with you."

Daniel looked at her bleakly. "I can't take you."

"Why not?"

"You hated my mother."

"I don't see what that has to do with it."

"There is no reason for your being there."

"Well, I'm your wife."

Daniel laughed savagely. "Are you?"

"You mean you really won't take me? I thought we might run over to New York for a few days afterward."

She did not kiss him good-by when he went off to the train, but she got little satisfaction from her coldness, as she was by no means certain that her husband noticed it.

5

The Bakers went to a hotel in the spring, and before that Brady rented a place into which his brood might move. Ann's house seemed to her very spacious and quiet after these migrations, she found herself with much time on her hands.

There was truth in Susanna's often reiterated statement that she was sure Ann must be miserable, for with her second disillusionment there came a change in her feeling for Peter. Now, when he drew the blank curtain of his uncommunicativeness about the secret city where he lived his vital life, she found that she had lost her wish to penetrate it. She was no longer interested, and this indifference terrified her. . . . She wished that she could be hurt again, or angry. . . . She used to wonder what Peter thought,—if he were satisfied with what unimportant part of his life remained outside the mysterious pale of his business,—but she never knew. . . . He remained a sealed book which she had little wish to peruse.

She had a bad time when the baby was born. The weather was very hot, and she became exhausted. She had never felt like that before; she did not seem to care what happened to her. Even when she dimly understood that the baby was dead, she could not seem to be sorry. . . . She only wished that now it was all over they would let her be: she wanted to slip into peace, but old Doctor Whipple kept bothering her. . . . She hated the taste of raw whisky. . . . Who was that crying? . . . Not—Peter? . . . Of course not. It

couldn't be Peter. . . . Why didn't they let her alone? They did, at last, and she sank into exhausted sleep.

She remained for a long time languid and totally uninterested in life. . . . She continued to want to be let alone. . . . The children tired her. . . . The hot weather exhausted her. . . . Peter's shoes squeaked when he came in to see her, and she had to clench her hands to keep from crying out at him. . . . She slept poorly, and Nora could not discover anything she wanted to eat. She used to lie on her bed for hours on end, without a thought in her mind, and play with the ring which hung loose on her finger. Occasionally tears would roll down her cheeks. She felt entirely superfluous.

Peter spent money recklessly in an effort to divert her. He bought her a diamond pin, with five good-sized stones set on a gold bar. It was a pin no man's wife could have worn had her husband been anything but successful, but Ann seemed singularly indifferent to it. She smiled, and kissed him, and wore it in the embroidery of her dressing sacque for a day or two, and then for all he knew, she forgot about it. . . . He tried again. This time he brought her home two Landseer drawings of dogs of a variety unknown to him. . . . Little Annabel learned to bark amusingly at them, and this won a smile from her mother. . . . He kept her room filled with flowers, too, but it was all of no avail. She remained as remote as a lay figure.

The doctor declined to become excited about her. "She has had a shock," he told Peter again and again. "We must just wait, and let nature take her course. . . . She is a wise old lady, Nature."

If she was, she moved mysteriously, for the thing which aroused Ann from her lethargy was an epidemic of scarlet fever which broke out in the crowded town. Peets developed a cough one late summer day, and in

the morning he was flushed and uncomfortable. . . . The next day Doctor Whipple told his mother, reluctantly, that he had caught the scourge.

Ann rose from her bed on the instant,—she felt rather tottering, but after she had been on her feet for a while she was steady enough to take charge of the sick-room, which was isolated in the top of the house, and the other children were rigorously excluded. Ann spent all her time there, except when she went to meals with the family, when the children's nurse relieved her. In spite of the work of nursing, she grew daily stronger and more competent. Peets was not very ill; she had a good time with him during the fortnight that they were shut up together.

At the end of that time Hendricks came down with the fever, and a few days later the baby, too, became ill. It was evident that exclusion from the sick-room had been unavailing.

"I don't believe in all this modern talk about contagion," Ann declared. "No one could have been more careful than we were."

None of the children was seriously ill: in every case there was a trying period of irritability to go through with, but there was practically no anxiety. It was, however, mid-winter by the time they were all about again, and Ann's illness was a thing of the past. If she felt less splendidly well than she had before, she told herself that it was because she was getting to be an old woman. She was twenty-nine years old.

Peter was jubilant over her recovery. "There is nothing like work to set people up!" he told Daniel.

PART TWO—THE FLIGHT

CHAPTER XX

PANIC

The spring following the fire brought a boom in the steel rail market, and Peter believed the Smith and Jefferson Company would declare a thirty per cent. dividend in the coming year. By the aid of loans from the Chicago National, he had taken a substantial share of every issue of stock, and he figured that if this prosperity continued, he could soon clear up his indebtedness. He would be a rich man. He might even be a millionaire. Who knew?

He felt about his plant much as some of the men he knew felt about a woman: he adored it and he could deny it nothing. It was his pride to have it up to date in every respect, and it tickled his vanity so much to have men come from other cities, even from Pittsburgh itself, to look it over, that he could not help believing the flattering things they said to him.

His house was filled with domestic symbols of success. In the days of his poverty, he had vowed to himself that some day he would have oil paintings. Now that day had arrived, and in addition to domestic landscapes of little distinction, he had a charming head of a woman by Carolus Duran, a sketch of a mounted soldier by Meissonier, and a large unsigned painting of horses in a field, declared by the dealer to have been painted by Rosa Bonheur.

The portrait of Ann in her lovely girlhood held its own remarkably well with these more pretentious pictures. Even the occasional dealer who came to see his collection in the hope of selling him something more, said that while it was old-fashioned it was fine, and Peter himself was very fond of it. It still inflated him somewhat to realize that he had won the beautiful young creature in the picture, although he was no longer troubled by any recollection of what it was he had promised in order to get her, as all foolishly romantic ideas of partnership were submerged in the triumphant individualism of his life.

When he came to hang large canvases on his walls, he found that they demanded furnishings of a corresponding scale, so he bought a rosewood parlor suite, and a flowered carpet to go under it. He also bought a set of china said to be a duplicate of one used by the Empress Eugénie, and yards and yards of books from enterprising agents who sought him out at his office. He often presented Ann with lengths of silk for dresses, or a piece of jewelry, or a yard or so of real lace. The time when he had looked forward to staggering her had come, but so far as he could see she remained disconcertingly firm on her feet.

2

After some months of lavish success, the business atmosphere began to change. The directors' meetings at the Chicago National were a little less self-congratulatory: there was introduced into them the faintest edge of anxiety. It was realized that the Civil War in America and the German-Austrian and Franco-Prussian Wars in Europe not only had disturbed the financial balance of the world, but that the period of expansion which followed them had done nothing to restore it. A director, back from a six months' foreign

tour, said one day that in his opinion every one had gone railroad mad. Peter was in a rage at what he considered an attack on his special industry, but Mr. Baker was disposed to listen with respect.

"There is a marked demand for railroad funds in New York," he said, "and a slight money stringency, already."

One of the other men spoke up. "There always is, election year."

Another nodded wisely. "If we continue the Republican Party in office everything will be all right," he said comfortably.

However, in spite of the fact that President Grant was reelected, as the winter went on money became increasingly difficult to get, and there was sinister talk of calling loans and increasing interest rates. Peter was instinctively against both these measures, but he was, after all, the youngest director, and his opinion had little weight in a falling market.

In the spring a financial crash in Vienna was followed by defaulting on vast loans made by England, and the market in the United States trembled apprehensively. The price of railroad securities declined sharply, and in spite of the fact that industry continued to boom along at the furious pace of the past two years, Peter found it increasingly difficult to make prompt collections of the money due him.

The directors' meetings became somewhat grim. Uneasiness existed in regard to the condition of the Chicago National, for too large a proportion of its assets was in local commercial paper, and it was decided to call some of the outstanding loans, but no one seemed to have any ready money, notwithstanding the fact that for some time there had been a steady withdrawal of currency. Peter grew to hate his banking connection; he was always in low spirits after a meeting of the directorate.

He was sitting at his desk at the iron works one day when Daniel Lunt came into the office. He had an unwontedly stern air.

"What makes you look like a funeral?"

His friend smiled wryly. "You haven't heard the news? Jay Cooke has failed."

"Jay . . . Cooke?" Peter simply couldn't take it in.

"It's the devil, isn't it?"

"Cooke's firm can't have failed, Dan!"

"It has. The stock market is going to pot."

Peter stood up, bewilderment clearing from his eyes. "If it is true, it means a general crash."

"Yes."

"My God!" Peter said devoutly, and added after an appreciable pause, "The damned sanctimonious old hypocrite!"

Lunt laughed shortly at that. Jay Cooke had been an ostentatious Christian, and godly citizens far from financial centers had trusted him with their money because of his well-advised piety.

Peter was thinking chaotic thoughts aloud. "Cooke? . . . Didn't his firm float the war loans? . . . There must be hell to pay in New York."

"Let's go over to the bank," Daniel suggested. "They may know more about it than we do."

Peter walked to the window and looked out into the yard. Work was roaring on as usual: flames, pale and anemic in the full sunlight, were streaming from the chimneys of the puddling furnaces, and the burly sound of heavy machines in action came hearteningly to him from the rail mill. A light smoke drifted from the top of the stack. It was between blasts. "I can't believe it," he said heavily.

The two men drove to the bank in Peter's high buggy. In the neighborhood of the iron works, the reassuring hum of industry filled the streets, but

across the river in the more sensitive financial district, panic was afoot. The sidewalks were crowded. The high voices of newsboys were shouting shrilly: "Jay Cooke failure!" "Great panic in New York."

Peter tied his mare to the post in front of the bank, and the two men went inside. Mr. Baker had gone to a meeting of the Clearing House Committee, but the other bank officials who stood about the place professed great optimism. "New York is a long way off," they said reassuringly.

3

Business in Chicago seemed to run its usual course for a week following the Jay Cooke failure, notwithstanding the fact that nineteen banks in New York closed their doors, and people were beginning to believe that the panic would be confined to the Eastern States, when all at once, with the suddenness of a whirlwind, it hit the western city.

A morning newspaper ran an unauthorized story of intended suspension on the part of the local banks, which was immediately denied, but the situation was so sensitive that the mere threat of failure was sufficient to bring about a panic. The Chicago National opened to find a long line of people waiting, and when Peter went over to the bank at noon, it reached nearly to the street. A man came through the crowd toward him: he was a workman, in dirty laboring clothes. He was folding a little handful of bills as he came on. He almost ran into Peter. He was one of the gang at the puddling furnaces.

"Mike Egan! What are you doing here?"

The man started, and clutched his roll of banknotes, but seeing who his questioner was, he relaxed and grinned pleasantly. "I was afraid for me money."

"What are you going to do with it?"

"I'll just be putting it in me sock."

Peter put a friendly hand on the man's shoulder. "Why don't you leave it where it is safe?"

The puddler looked at his boss humbly, "I'll do whatever ye tell me, sir."

"Then take it over to the receiving teller, and deposit it again."

Egan glanced past the winding line, to the window where the receiving teller sat in melancholy isolation. "I'll have lost me half-day for nothing!" he sighed, and walked over to the amazed official.

"I wouldn't have done that," some one said, over Peter's shoulder.

He whirled around; it was Daniel Lunt. "Why not?"

"How can you tell what may happen?"

"You don't think this bank is in danger, Dan?"

"I don't know. . . . I only know I wouldn't have taken the responsibility of stopping that poor devil of yours."

When Egan came back from the window, he gave Peter a sheepish smile. "Thank ye, sir," he said, and would have gone on had not his boss detained him.

"How much money have you here, Mike?"

"Four hundred and thirty-two dollars and fifty-eight cents, sir. . . . I'd have more, but ye'll maybe remember I've had the doctor to pay."

Peter remembered. "How is Mrs. Egan?"

"It's finely she is now, sir, thank ye kindly. . . . Me troubles is over, praise be."

When he had gone on, Peter left Daniel abruptly. In a few moments he returned, patting the breast pocket of his coat.

"What have you there?" the lawyer asked.

Peter was confused. "Four hundred and thirty-two dollars and fifty-eight cents," he confessed, "but don't give me away, Dan."

A directors' meeting was called immediately after closing time, and Peter waited for it, fascinated by the drama of the situation. As the afternoon wore on, the atmosphere in the bank lobby changed. Officials were less encouraging, perhaps because the line before the paying teller's window did not dwindle. Other directors came in: they talked together in low tones, as if at a funeral; they were nervous and jumpy, and their tempers were uncertain.

Peter was disgusted. He was himself prepared to meet the situation with bluff optimism, but when he tried to lighten his friends' depression with offhand assurance, he got an impression that he merely bored them. He went off and stood in the doorway, looking through the glass at the crowded street. . . . Now and then men stopped, and took a good look up at the bank, as if to assure themselves that it was still there. . . . Boys were crying news of the panic. . . . Doubt began to gnaw at the fine edifice of Peter's conceit, and the possibility that he was merely an amateur financier occurred to him. Was he wrong in his blind belief in industry? Was it possible that ruin had been crouched behind the façade of prosperity he had so admired? He was very unhappy, standing there by himself. The most uncomfortable moment which any man can know, the moment when he realizes that he may have been a fool, overwhelmed him with chagrin.

The meeting did nothing to lift his spirits. Mr. Baker looked ghastly. The chandelier which hung over the long directors' table was lighted, and its hard rays struck mercilessly on the old man, dividing his face into harsh and curiously tragic planes of light and shadow. His jaunty air was gone. His hands shook so that papers which he held rattled audibly in the silence which awaited his opening announcement. The directors leaned forward tensely, their faces hard, their eyes hostile.

"Gentlemen," the old man began, in so low a voice that the men at the other end of the table had difficulty in hearing him, "I can not tell whether we shall remain solvent or not."

The words caused an explosion of high talk, which died suddenly as the old man went on. "In the last week there has been an unprecedented demand for currency. We have paid out over four hundred thousand dollars. . . . To-day has been a terrible strain. What will happen to-morrow no one knows."

"What are our securities worth?" some one shot at him.

"What is anything worth when the bottom has dropped out of the market?" countered another.

Josephus Baker smiled wanly. "We have made loans to the railroads; we have their bonds as security."

A director laughed shortly. "If the Stock Exchange hadn't closed, God knows what railroad securities would have sunk to!"

"Our local commercial paper is practically worthless, I suppose?"

This statement stung Peter. "You have some Smith and Jefferson paper," he said crisply. "I trust you don't regard that as worthless?"

The other men looked at him inimically, and one of them asked him coolly, "May we assume that it will be perfectly convenient for your company to pay off its indebtedness to this bank to-morrow?"

"No," Peter said, "it won't be, and you know it,—but our security is good in the long run."

Mr. Baker looked at his youngest director with tired eyes. "My boy, the trouble is that we may not have a long run," he said heavily.

It was late when they adjourned; as they walked down the steps a distant clock struck eight. Mr. Baker said desperately, "There will be a line out here a block

long to-morrow." Peter was sorry for him, in the midst of his own depression.

At eleven o'clock the following morning, the Chicago National closed its doors, and the telegraph carried the news to a thousand cities, "Another Bank Goes Under." Its currency was exhausted, but the officials hoped to be able to convert at least a part of the bank's securities into cash, and announced the suspension of payment to be only temporary.

Peter, summoned to a hasty directors' meeting, found the lobby a scene of the most distressing confusion. It was crowded with people—shabby people for the most part—and desperate now that they were refused their money. One or two women were in tears; one or two men were abusive. It was damnably disagreeable.

The directors were going over the bank's loans, and the vice-president told Peter that two of the men present had turned in government bonds in order to pay off their notes. There was a little pause at that, and then, reluctantly, Mr. Baker confronted Peter.

"Smith, can you do anything in regard to your account? You know we hold the notes of the Smith and Jefferson Company for one hundred thousand dollars."

"Our credit is good for twice that."

"It was a month ago," one of the directors said harshly, "and may be again to-morrow. The point is, what is it worth in cash to-day? . . . And that isn't all."

"No," Mr. Baker continued, "that isn't all. We have your note, Smith, for a hundred and twenty-five thousand, secured by stock in your company. I don't need to tell you that I dislike calling these loans, but in the emergency I have no choice. If you can't find the money, we shall be forced to get what we can on your paper."

Peter was aghast. "You know what will happen if

you throw that stock on the market to-day," he protested. "It won't bring a tenth of its value."

"A tenth is something," one of the men said trenchantly.

Peter sat silent for a moment, steadying himself. "I'll do what I can," he said finally. "I want to save my company if possible,—and do what is right by the bank, too. Unfortunately, we are already mortgaged,—I can not raise any money on our real estate. If you will give me an hour I'll see what I can do."

They gave him the time readily enough, and he walked out of the directors' room with despair in his heart. He knew it was impossible for him to get so large an amount of money. He knew no one who would help him. He also knew what this meant. It meant the finish of the Smith and Jefferson Company, and in the crash scores of his employees, who had taken his word for it that the stock was a safe investment, would lose their savings. This thought stung him intolerably. . . . These men were too simple-minded to understand the intricacies of high finance,—God, he was beginning to think that he was himself! They would blame him. They would think he had not been square with them.

He drove back to the plant, where he kept his securities in his office safe. He drove savagely, with a grim look on his face. He had never in his life been so hopeless. He was terribly alone.

He knew well enough what was there before he opened the safe door. It had been a waste of precious time to come. . . . His customers? Already he had made every effort to collect what money was due him. . . . His contracts? At this desperate moment, what he needed was a tangible asset which might readily be turned into cash. He came across a small package of government bonds; it was little Hendricks' christening gift from Mr. Cortlandt. A trust fund,—he couldn't

touch that. . . . All the Smith and Jefferson stock he owned outright was there, worthless in the emergency. . . . The rest was Ann's inheritance, which he had scrupulously invested in gilt-edged securities. He turned the certificates over. Government bonds of various issues;—the next thing to currency, those. . . . Municipal bonds, as good as money, any day. . . . This was solid stuff; it would be practically unaffected by the panic. The original one hundred thousand and twenty-five more from reinvested interest. . . . If he could turn that much in, he was certain the Chicago National people would agree not to smash the iron company. Smash it? Smash the Smith and Jefferson Company? The certificates still in his hand, Peter walked over to the window and looked out into the bustling yard of the plant. The furnace breathed a great gush of flame into the air. It was intolerable to know that anything so vigorous was in danger of its life. As he stood looking out of the window, three men came into the office; the foremost was Egan, to whom Peter had that day paid over the money he had left on deposit at the Chicago National.

"I'm bringin' lads from the furnace to talk wid ye, sir," Egan began. "They've money in th' bank the same as me, an' I'm tellin' them ye'll see they get it, sir."

"I wish I could," Peter said heavily, "but I can't draw any money either, now that the bank has closed."

"An' me earnings?" one of the men demanded wildly. "It's the savings of ten years I have in that place, sir,—an' it's no young man I am."

"Ye'll never lose wid th' boss lookin' out f'r ye!" Mike interposed. "I'm tellin' ye he's a big man in th' bank."

His fellow puddler brightened. "I hope it's right ye are," he said slowly. He looked old, and broken by his anxiety.

The other was scarcely more than a boy. "I was to bring my girl from the old country on my savings," he said. "If they're lost I've lost her, too." He looked desperate, in his young despair.

Peter still had Ann's inheritance, readily convertible into currency, in his hands. Abruptly he thrust the securities into his pocket, and went down to his buggy. The office door slammed viciously behind him.

Later he could never remember anything of his frantic drive across the city, lashed by the devils of responsibility and regret. What happened to him seemed at the moment supremely unimportant; he was obsessed by the conviction that he was morally obligated to do anything in his power to right a situation for which he was so damnably responsible.

He was still exalted when he went into the directors' room. The men were sitting about the table, under a cloud of cigar smoke, and as they turned hard faces toward him the drama of the moment seized him. Without having consciously made up his mind, he flung his wife's fortune into the maw of the panic; almost without a qualm paid off the hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars loaned him on his Smith and Jefferson stock, and secured an agreement that the notes of the company should not be pressed for the present. The murmur of commendation which greeted his great gesture had barely died away when he realized what he had done; he had, temporarily, at any rate, saved his business, but it was entirely at his wife's expense. . . . Whatever happened, he must now pull the iron company through the panic. If he failed to do so, Ann was ruined, for the Smith and Jefferson securities which the bank turned back to him on payment of his note were now all that remained of the tidy little fortune left her by her uncle. As his brain cleared from the storm which had obscured it, he was aghast at what he had done, and to add to his dismay he could

not see that he had accomplished anything for the bank. It was too deeply involved to be rescued by so paltry a sum as a hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars.

"The clearing-house will not allow us to reopen unless we can show a half million in currency," Mr. Baker said despairingly. He knew, as they all did, that only a miracle could provide so great an amount.

When the meeting was over, Peter shook off his fellow-directors, and hurried away. He wanted an opportunity to think,—to plan what he should say to Ann. . . . He wanted to be alone. . . . He wondered if he could ever make her see why he had acted as he did. It seemed doubtful, for he did not fully understand it himself. He went back to his office as one seeking sanctuary, and opened the door with a desperate sense of relief. Some one was in the room. It was a woman, sitting in the chair by his desk. It was Ann.

She stood up as he came in. "I have been waiting a long time," she said.

"What are you doing here?" Peter asked her harshly. The shock of seeing her threw him quite off what balance he retained.

Alienated by his tone, she shrugged, and then made an effort to overcome her mortification. "I have just heard there is a panic," she said.

Peter laughed shortly. "Well?"

"I came to ask you if the Smith and Jefferson Company is affected by it."

"It is extremely likely to be," Peter told her grimly. His raw nerves were responding automatically to the irritation of being cross-questioned.

"Do you mean . . . Is there a chance that you may fail?"

"Good God, Ann, do we have to go into this now?"

She swung away from him at that, and stood looking out of the window into the blank night. After a

moment, she turned, and Peter was melted at the sweetness which she threw into her manner. "I just came to say that if you need it, you must take the money my uncle left me. If the company should be in danger, I thought perhaps I might have enough to save it."

Peter looked at her blankly. He wanted enormously to take her in his arms,—to crush her to him, and to pour out his sorry confession. . . . He wanted to cry, like a woman, and fear of this, as well as a conviction that it was an unworthy thing to do to throw himself on his wife's mercy, stimulated him. He drew back from Ann's dangerous softness. "Your money is gone," he told her roughly.

"Gone?"

"Yes. This afternoon I paid off my note at the bank with it." He was in for it now, and he knew he was doing it badly; one glance at his wife's stony face told him that. "I had Smith and Jefferson stock on deposit, and they would have sold me out." He broke off, because he could see that Ann was not listening to him. She was standing very still, and had turned alarmingly pale. Her gray eyes were black in her white face.

When he stopped speaking there was a moment's silence. Then she said, in a thin thread of a voice, "This is the end, Peter."

"What do you mean?"

"I am through. . . . Through with living with you."

"Because I took your money?"

Her scorn was tremendous. "It doesn't matter about money! . . . What does matter is that you could get to this point without ever telling me anything about it. . . . Don't you see it is because you have become so accustomed to keeping everything back which really concerns you, that you could do a thing like this?"

Peter made a gesture of irritation at this introduction of the ancient bone of contention between them.

"Nonsense," he said.

"We have been married ten years, Peter. . . . It is ten years ago that you promised to make me your partner. . . . And how have you kept your promise? You tell me nothing. . . . You humiliate me. . . . You don't even treat me like a wife, Peter, let alone a partner! You treat me like a mistress!"

"Ann!" Peter was wounded, but he was also shocked at her use of such a word, and unfortunately it was his lesser emotion which made itself evident.

Her lip curled. "Very likely I was a fool to believe that it was possible to share any man's whole life: it isn't in our American tradition. . . . But I did believe just that. I thought you were different from the others. I thought you would let me work with you. . . . And now I can't go on living with you because it doesn't seem to me to be decent."

Peter was terribly shaken. He made a quick move toward her, but when she recoiled, he paused. He could find nothing adequate to say in answer to her arraignment. "You must do what you think best," he faltered, and because of his struggle to keep his voice steady, it had a mechanical sound.

"Yes," Ann said, and went very quickly to the door. "I would rather you didn't come with me," she told him, as he started after her. Without further words she slipped through the opening, and was gone.

4

This last catastrophe made the earlier ones seem trivial to Peter. . . . He told himself that of course Ann hadn't meant what she said, but her words had sounded horribly final. Leave him? The idea was preposterous. Life without Ann? He could stand losing his money,—he was only thirty-four years old,—plenty of men made a start when they were older than that,—but he simply couldn't go on without Ann. . . .

He wished that he had told her so,—had pleaded with her, instead of sitting there dumb. . . . He hadn't a leg to stand on. . . . He hadn't kept his word to her. . . . He recalled the day she had agreed to marry him, and the fine proposition he had made her.

"We'll do big things," he had said, "and we'll do them together!"

Together? Here he was, as good as ruined, with Ann estranged from him. Lord, what a world!

After a long time he straightened up stiffly. He felt as though he had been sitting with his head on his arms for a long time, and he looked at his watch. It was past ten o'clock. He pulled the lid of his desk down, and locked it, mechanically. He was wondering what he should say to Ann. He was wishing that he knew what caused the strange quirk in his character which precluded confidences. Well, anyway, he would go home, and try to tell her how he felt. That was the least he could do.

The house was dark when he let himself in with his latch-key; there was only a faint glimmer of gas in the hall. Peter hurried up-stairs without delay; he was all on fire to make his confession, and if possible win absolution. The door of the room which he shared with Ann was shut. He opened it cautiously. The broad white bed was turned neatly down in a triangle on either side, but Ann was not there! He went in, and looked about. She was nowhere to be seen; there was no trace of her, and no homely, reassuring sight of her things anywhere. He did not dare call, for fear of getting no response. He did not frame the words, "She has gone!" but they rang in his ears nevertheless.

He tiptoed into the nursery, where Annabel lay asleep. Ann was not there; only the nurse started up with a smothered ejaculation. Murmuring an apology, Peter backed out, and went up to the room where the boys slept. He lighted a match, and peered over at

them in its flickering light. The faint illumination danced on their faces, and he saw that they were alone. Ann was not there. He lighted the gas in the hall, flooding the upper house with light. Only the guest chamber remained, and he turned into it mechanically. The light struck across the room, and in its bright shaft he saw—Ann's hat, which she had worn in his office that evening! He was giddy with relief as he stood still, listening. There was no sound, and he cautiously opened the door wide, so that the light fell across the bed. Ann lay there, asleep. He could see her listless hand, lying along the bed-clothes, and the thick plait of her red hair. She did not move, and he withdrew silently, closing the door with infinite care. At any rate, the worst had not happened. She had not left his house. He could not endure the thought of his deserted room, so he went on down-stairs. An envelope lay on the table by the door. Mechanically, he took it up. It was a telegram addressed to him.

He was not particularly interested in it, as he told himself that it would only be another railroad attempting to cancel another order which he had taken in good faith, and to fulfill which he had bought ore and coal. He turned it over in his hands for a moment, and finally, with a shrug, he tore it open. He read, and blinked; he had a sensation of seeing stars. The message meant absolutely nothing to him. He read it again, his lips moving as he sensed the words.

"Virginia City, Nevada, Peter Smith, Chicago. If in trouble call on me up to five hundred thousand dollars. Bank of California will deliver currency. Best regards. Titus Jefferson."

Peter, dumfounded, stared at it. . . . Five hundred thousand dollars! He hadn't believed there was so much money loose in the world. . . . Half a million! . . . Two years since he heard from Titus. . . .

Mines, of course! Jeff striking it rich, while he,—industrious, sober,—was busted. . . . Half a million dollars! . . . Good old Jeff!

His first thought was that he could buy back Ann's securities. His mind was racing like an unleashed engine. . . . He could lie low, and wait, and pick furnaces up cheap. He could be the biggest iron man in the United States! He'd show those supercilious drivers at the bank! The bank? His heart sank; he had forgotten it. . . . Why, in God's name, had he become a director? Why had he urged his workmen to deposit money there? It wasn't his affair what they did with their money. Reluctantly, he recalled the desperate men and women in the lobby after payment was stopped, and unwillingly he knew what he was going to do with his half million dollars, although it was some moments before he admitted it to himself.

At last, with a sigh, he put Jefferson's telegram into his pocket. . . . There was nothing for him where he was, so he decided that he might as well go around to old Baker's house, and put him out of his misery. He had looked pretty bad that day at the meeting, and the other directors had ridden him hard. It afforded Peter grim amusement to think that he would enable the old boy to get it back at them in the morning.

The front of the banker's house was dark, and Peter remembered that it was getting on toward midnight, but there was still a light in the rear on the first floor, so he decided to ring. He pulled the door-bell, and it jangled lonesomely in the still night. There was not another sound in all the world, and he shivered in sudden nervous excitability. . . . Through the glass in the door he could see a faint glimmer of light in the upper hall. . . . And then on the stairs. . . . It descended jerkily. . . . It was Mrs. Baker, candle in hand. Her hair was screwed up in little knobs, and she held her dressing-gown tight about her.

"Who is it?" she cried timorously.

"Peter Smith. . . . It's all right!"

The tremulous candle flame steadied somewhat, and a bolt turned in the lock. The door opened a crack, and the old lady peered fearfully out. The young man could see that she was frightened. He divined that it was this disquieting fear which had driven her down through the darkness of the silent house, in answer to his ring.

"What has happened?" she quavered.

"I want to see Mr. Baker."

The old woman stared at him desolately, and a sensation of unreasonable dread made Peter shiver. "He's in there. . . . In the back sitting-room. . . . I tried to make him come up. . . . I tried to make him. . . . I'm afraid to go in to him."

A feeling as of prickling goose-flesh swept over Peter. "I'll go," he said, as lightly as he could. "You go back to bed." He took the candle from her and lighted the hall chandelier. It made him feel better when, with a miniature explosion inside the globe, the gas sprang out, and there were no more dark corners. He had not known this sensation of undefined fear since he was a child. Mrs. Baker turned to the stairs, and, loath to proceed, he stood watching her shambling ascent. Although he could not have said why, he divined that he had not reassured her; he could see that she was still frightened, but too much afraid of her fear to voice it. At the turn of the stairs, she looked profoundly down at him, and he waved his hand reassuringly. They were like conspirators in the silent house; they had barely spoken above a whisper.

At the door of the back sitting-room, he paused and listened. A thin crack of light shone along the sill. He could hear nothing. . . . He knocked softly. . . . No response. . . . Summoning his will, he turned the knob and went in. Dusk lurked in the room,

but the gas over the desk was lighted, and so shaded that its rays fell in a round pool on Mr. Baker's head and face as he sat under it. He was all right, and relief shook Peter strongly.

The old man faced the door, but no expression crossed his blank eyes for a moment; then he gathered himself together. "Smith!" he said very low, and his right hand made a hasty gesture of shoving something out of sight under the papers. He looked shockingly broken.

"I've good news, sir." Mr. Baker seemed not to take that in. He continued to look mournfully at the younger man, and his eyes made Peter's flesh creep. "I have half a million dollars," he added explicitly. "We can get the currency in a few days, and open up again."

Suddenly the old man crumpled in his chair and dropped his head to his arms on the desk. The movement displaced some papers, and Peter saw what it was which he had shoved out of sight under them.

He reached over the banker's shoulder and took possession of the sinister thing. . . . He didn't know what to say; he was, all at once, embarrassed.

Baker said brokenly, "I am glad you came."

A piece of paper covered with writing floated to the floor, and Peter stooped to pick it up. "My dear wife," he read, in straggling letters at the top.

The banker put his hand on Peter's arm;—he held it with a nervous tense clasp, like a woman's. "Are you sure?"

Peter showed him Jeff's telegram. He talked of his friend's success,—of the mining developments,—of anything, in order to give the old man time to recover. In a little while he persuaded Mr. Baker to go out with him and forage for crackers and cheese, and a drink of whisky. He was glad to see that the good liquor brought the color back into his old friend's face.

It was morning before he went away, but as they stood talking in the hall, Peter could hear the faint sound of a door closing in the darkness above.

Outside the air was full of the twitter of wakening birds, and a pink light made the wicked old world seem infantile. The city was empty as Peter walked through it: the feverish crowd which had thronged its streets the day before was gone. He did not go home at all, as it was so nearly day.

5

Ann awoke early on the following morning, and moved with automatic caution in the large bed, fearing to wake her husband. . . . She blinked sleepily, and then lifted herself sharply. Peter was not there! Through the glare of her bewilderment, she recognized familiar things. She was in the guest room! Her first instinctive reaction to this realization was to wonder if she were ill. Then all at once she remembered, and she fell back on her pillows. She was through with Peter. She had made the final gesture.

The house was very still. She lifted her watch from the table by the bed and opened the case: it was five o'clock. She thought that Peter was asleep, and stung by his indifference, she returned to the round of her resentful thoughts. From them one resolution emerged: she must see Daniel Lunt.

It was still early when she arrived at his office. She felt curiously guilty as she rapped on the clouded glass pane in the door, and she flinched back miserably when a young man came to open it.

"He isn't here yet." He looked the visitor up and down inquiringly. "Are you a client?" he asked her.

Ann wondered if she were,—if she wanted to be. After an instant, she faltered miserably that she was just a friend.

The doubt in the young man's look deepened, but she summoned dignity to meet it, and he said grudgingly that she might enter. Inside, she seated herself in a stiff chair and steeled herself to wait.

When Lunt came in he was concerned to see her seated in the place ordinarily reserved for book agents. "My dear Ann!" he exclaimed. "What are you doing here at this hour?" He turned indignantly to his clerk. "You should have taken Mrs. Smith into my office."

"Don't scold him," Ann intervened, touched at the young man's sudden collapse. "I said I would wait here."

They went into the lawyer's pleasant inner room, where calf-bound books lined the walls, and, wakened by the sun which streamed in from the east, gave a golden color to the place.

"Is it something important?"

"Yes. . . . Rather. . . . I'm going to leave Peter."

Lunt looked at her with intent and startled eyes. "Why?"

"Because of something which happened last night. . . . No, because of something which has been happening for a long time." She was aware of threatening tears. She could not go on.

"Take your time," Daniel advised her, in his most professional manner. "Suppose you begin with last night."

"Well. . . . You know Mr. Cortlandt left me a hundred thousand dollars?"

"Yes."

"Yesterday afternoon I learned about the panic; Peter hadn't told me; I happened to pick up the paper. . . . At first I was angry,—and then I wondered if the Smith and Jefferson Company was all right. . . . I was afraid it might not be. . . . So I went down to

Peter's office:—I wanted to give him my money. . . . I waited for a long time, until he came in. He was angry because I was there. . . ."

"I doubt that, Ann," Lunt interjected gently.

"Ah, you didn't see his face! I am always nervous when he looks like that, and I was nervous then. I told him what I had come for,—"

"Yes?"

"And he told me that he had already taken my money,—that it was gone!"

"Ann!"

She nodded. "That doesn't matter," she said. "The important thing is that his taking it without telling me is the last straw,—it has broken the back of my endurance."

"How could he do such a thing?"

"Oh, he has my power of attorney or whatever you call it, and it simply didn't occur to him to consult me. . . . He is made like that. That is why I am leaving him. I can't stand it any longer."

Lunt took up a pencil, and began making aimless marks on the blotter on his desk. There was a moment's silence: then he looked full at Ann. "My dear," he said, "I wish you knew what some of my clients have to complain of! Peter hasn't a thought for any other woman in the world but you."

"I suppose I shall shock you, Dan,—but somehow that doesn't seem important. . . . I know most women think unfaithfulness is the one thing which excuses leaving a man,—if anything does,—but no man understands that there is more than one kind of unfaithfulness. . . . My idea of marriage is a sort of joint ownership in the adventure of life, and Peter has fortified all the essential part of himself against me;—he has barred me out. . . . We had a horrid scene. . . . Well,—it's over."

"What are your plans?"

"Plans?" Ann looked a little scared. "I haven't any."

"You intend to leave Peter. . . . Do you think he will let you take the children?"

"He must."

"He may," Daniel Lunt conceded,—"but you must face the possibility of refusal. You haven't legal grounds, you know. You can't divorce Peter unless he makes it possible."

Ann shrank back into her chair. "Divorce, Dan? I don't want that. . . . Divorce is horrid. I just want to get away."

"That is simpler. . . . I dare say it might be arranged."

"Will you tell Peter?"

"It's like hitting a man when he's down, Ann. He's probably broke, you know."

Ann looked up startled. "Didn't my money do any good?"

"I doubt it. . . . Peter is carrying a big loan at the bank, and the plant is mortgaged, besides. He is likely to go on the rocks, and have to begin all over."

Ann looked at Lunt intently, and for some time neither of them spoke. "It doesn't seem to be the most God-given moment for me to be leaving him," she said at length, and smiled at the lawyer shakily.

He leaned nearer. "What a darling you are, Ann! You'll stay?"

"Yes, I'll stay. . . . And don't tell Peter about my pathetic little rebellion."

She wondered what her husband had thought of her desertion of his room the night before. She hoped that it would not mean a scene, for she was too tired, emotionally, to go through with one. When she regained the house she found that he had not slept at home the night before, and she was filled with profound relief.

CHAPTER XXI

HARD TIMES

THE panic did not greatly affect Daniel Lunt, as lawyers were one luxury no one gave up in the days of broken contracts which followed the smash. When the new Palmer House was ready, Susanna moved him into it, and he found it convenient to be near his office. He fell into the habit of working there nights, where his law books were at hand, and where there was no possibility of being interrupted. He came to enjoy being alone in the silent office building: it was like being on a desert island; it was as near as he could come to escape.

At the hotel he and his wife had two bedrooms, a dark little slit of a bathroom, and a sitting-room, all very elaborately furnished. Daniel never came to have any feeling that the place belonged to him, but he was well enough satisfied with it. When he was first married he had liked housekeeping. He had enjoyed coming in at night to be greeted olfactorily by a rich promise of dinner to come: he had liked his open fires, and his sense of closing the world out when he shut his own door behind him, but now he had little desire to close any door upon himself and Susanna. The hotel did very well for that.

His club was not far away, and every night that Susanna did not take him out to dinner, Daniel would drop in there for a few moments before going to his office. He always found good fellows to receive him

with the geniality his temperament so greatly needed, —lucky devils who had never married, for the most part. It became his habit to have a whisky or two with them before he went off to his solitary work, but never more than that, as his danger did not lie in convivial drinking. It was later on, when the light from his office window was the only one to break the gloom of the whole business block, that he stimulated his low spirits with Bourbon which he kept locked in a closet. He carried the key of this place about with him, and he flattered himself that no one knew how often he secretly replenished his stock. He had no idea that the men he met when he shambled morosely into the hotel late at night were talking among themselves of his excesses, or that Susanna, in the company of ladies she met in the high Victorian parlors, referred with plaintive patience to her husband's "habits."

They all pitied her excessively. "Poor little thing," they said to one another,—and to other people, too.

The young lawyer never admitted to himself that his habit of solitary drinking had become a serious thing, nor to what extent he had disintegrated because of it, but he lost some necessary part of his self-respect, nevertheless. His life seemed to him to have no compensations at all. He liked the men he saw well enough, but Daniel's was a nature which demanded inner harmony in order to function properly, and that he did not have. He was engulfed in loneliness, and his soul became a desert place. The idealism which had sustained him in his young manhood had been destroyed by his experience with matrimony. Women were no longer celestial beings to him: like every other man in the world, he judged them all by the one he knew the better, and he thought little of the so-called gentler sex.

He watched his wife covertly when they were din-

ing with friends. She was a pretty thing,—prettier than ever, he thought, grudgingly,—and her technique in flirtation amused him. Men were all fools, he decided, and it comforted his vanity to see that he had been no exception to the general rule when he mistook his wife's animation for gaiety, and her bright surface sympathy for kindliness. She was always surrounded by men at a party: no other woman in town possessed so sure a magnetic attraction.

He was not always hard in his judgments, and often he was more touched by Susanna's plight than by his own. Looking at her when she was at her sparkling best, he felt that she was made for joy, and he blamed himself for having failed to give it to her. . . . There were long periods of time when he was gentle with her, or quizzically kind, and at rare intervals, driven by his ache of loneliness, he would attempt more intimate relations. To all these moods Susanna presented the same front of plaintive receptivity: she never rebuffed him, nor gave him an angle from which he might strike a spark of passionate resentment. She was like a frightened rabbit in his hands,—only he could never feel her heart beats. . . . She was curiously unshaken by anything he could do or say, and when he yielded to her merely feminine temptation she left him with a taste of ashes in his mouth.

When they moved to the Palmer House Susanna insisted that it was time Mrs. Wilcox gave up keeping boarders, and as Lunt was quite willing to assume the modest expenses of his mother-in-law, it was decided that she should join a widowed sister in New England. The old lady left in tears, and wrote dismally of her new experiences, but her daughter treated this with characteristic lightness.

"She was always depressed about something," she reminded Daniel comfortably.

2

When the first squall of panic blew over, the steady gale of adversity which followed in its wake found the Smith and Jefferson Company well battened down, with its sails reefed, ready to weather the heavy seas of business depression. Thanks to Titus Jefferson, its indebtedness at the bank was cleared, and Peter was able to arrange for long-time payments on ore and coal already delivered at his yard. Daniel Lunt managed to hold some of his customers to their contracts, and Peter secured a few new orders by offering prices which brought no profit to the company, but which enabled him to meet his weekly pay-roll, and to hold some skeleton of his force together. He turned men off ruthlessly, and the salaries of officers, as well as the men's wages, were cut. In these conditions, the Smith and Jefferson Company passed its annual dividend, and there was little hope of the stock paying anything for some time to come. It was obvious to Peter that it was necessary to reduce his expenses; he broached the matter, diffidently, to Ann.

"We should give up this big house," she said.

Peter nodded. "I wish I could sell it. The first payment on the mortgage will be due in a few months, and I see no possibility of meeting it."

For a time this seemed unlikely, and then luck came his way. A lumberman appeared from the Michigan wilderness, fabulously rich notwithstanding the panic, and engaged Daniel Lunt for his lawyer. He intended to settle in Chicago, and when the possibility of buying a well-equipped house was suggested to him he jumped at the opportunity. Ann, intimidating him by an air of worldly superiority, showed him through, and agreed to sell him all the important furnishings. She was delighted at her good stroke of business.

"Can you bear to lose your pictures?" she asked

Peter, remembering with what enthusiasm he had bought them.

"We'll keep the portrait of you, Annie," was all he said, and she was unable to tell how much regret his stoicism hid.

Since the night she had gone to his office her husband had been more inarticulate than ever before. She had meant to have some sort of explanation with him, and to tell him, as affectionately as she could, that she had abandoned her intention of leaving him, but he gave her no opportunity. So far as she could tell he had forgotten all about the ugly little scene, for beyond one searching look when he came home on the following evening and found her awaiting him as usual, he portrayed no consciousness of strain. She came to the conclusion that, not knowing her revolt had taken a sufficiently definite form to lead her to desert his room, he looked upon the whole episode merely as an explosion of feminine nerves. She was glad enough to let it rest at that.

The city had not yet caught up with the buildings lost in the fire, and her search for accommodations proved discouraging. The empty Wilcox cottage occurred to her one day when she was facing the desperate possibility of boarding, and she took it in much the same spirit that an exhausted swimmer takes a life raft. It was, at any rate, a roof over them.

She brought only the most necessary things with her, many of them were the simple pieces which they had bought when they first began keeping house, and which were altogether too plain to suit the expanding taste of the newly arrived lumberman. The only reminder she had of former grandeur was her portrait: it occupied an entire wall of the shabby little sitting-room, and the eager, glowing young creature in the picture seemed to Ann to be curiously unrelated to the disillusioned woman she had become.

She found this second experience in economy to be very different from her earlier one in the cottage across the street, which often brought a lump into her throat when she looked over at it. That had been a glamourous time, and this was stern reality. Then she had kept the family books, and her satisfaction in adding to the credit side of the ledger gave her infinitely more pleasure than she would have had from the things she went without. Then she knew exactly what she got with what she gave up, and she had found economizing interesting. Now she moved in a fog of uncertainty. She did not know how much money they had to spend, nor how much stringency her care relieved. From time to time Peter deposited an arbitrary sum to her account in the bank, and she made it go as far as she could, dutifully, but without enthusiasm. As she had no idea what their maximum expenditure could be, she had no sense of triumph in establishing their minimum. She did not help plan the general scheme, and in these conditions she found constant supervision of expenses exhausting.

The main difference in her life was that all its quality of spaciousness was gone. She was comfortable enough, as Nora remained with them and her mistress often said that she took better care of them than a whole house full of servants would have done, but in the little cottage Ann had none of the privacy which she had enjoyed in her larger house. At Peter's suggestion she shared a room with Annabel, while he occupied a tiny single apartment at the top of the house. "I'll have more quiet there," he said.

This seemed a reasonable desire, for the cottage rang with the noise attendant on three healthy children confined in a small place. They were continually tumbling over one another, and they quarreled often. It seemed to Ann that they were always in her room when she dressed, forcing her to put her clothes on in

the irritating isolation of a small closet. She had to struggle with herself not to be irritable with them, but they were, nevertheless, the great consolation of her altered existence.

They were growing into adult people with horrid suddenness. When school was over for the summer Hendricks went off over town and secured a position as messenger in the Chicago National Bank.

"But, my dear," his mother protested, "you should be out playing,—not at work all day long in your vacation!"

"I like work," Hendricks protested. "I like it a lot better than school. I don't want to go back, next winter."

"You have to have an education, Hendricks!"

"I don't see why. My father didn't."

In the evening the boy appealed to Peter, "Can't I quit school, father? I want to keep on working."

"How about it, Annie?"

"Peter,—he must go to school. I want him to go to college."

Peter frowned. "College has spoiled a lot of good men."

"That's what I think," the boy put in. "I want to keep on at the bank."

His father shot a quick look at him. "The first thing we know you'll be getting an idea of being a banker rather than an iron man! Your mother is right: you had better go back for a while yet,—it won't hurt you."

That settled it, for Peter was a court of last resort, but Hendricks rebelled at doing his lessons, and was in continual disgrace with his teachers. Breakfast every morning became a thing of horrid acrimony because he was always late.

Peets was made of different stuff. He was as fond of idling as his brother was of work, although he man-

aged to do just well enough in his lessons to keep out of trouble with his teacher. In the afternoon he was always deeply involved in play with the other boys, or in strolling about the neighborhood with girls. When it was his turn to shovel the snow off the front sidewalk, and to keep up the fires in the stoves, passers-by plunged through drifts, and the family shivered. He had a wretched memory for his duties, but he never was known to forget a promised pleasure.

Ann told herself that it was her daughter she should be proudest of, for Annabel was an admirable child, who always brought home excellent marks from school. Peets called her "teacher's pet," but awoke no resentment, for placidity was one of the little girl's most evident characteristics. She had a round attentive face, and round, unwavering gray eyes under blonde hair, which she wore pulled back from her forehead in a round comb. She had a singularly unyielding quality, extraordinary in a child of tender years, and possibly because of this inflexibility she was not a favorite with her classmates. There was something about her which aroused her mother's pity, notwithstanding the fact that she was the most successful of her children.

Peter had a tight-mouthed and defensive look in those days. He was doing three men's work at the plant, as well as carrying a heavy load of responsibility, and he was tired out all the time,—much too tired to try to tell Ann what he was doing. She found this less annoying than she had before, as when she capitulated she had done so whole-heartedly. She had remained on Peter's terms, and she admitted no regrets. She was needed at the head of his house. She could not imagine him facing this cataclysm in his life without her aid.

3

One evening some eight months after the panic Daniel Lunt was at work in his office. He was digging precedents out of a fat volume of *Illinois Supreme Court Reports*, and was completely absorbed, when he was startled to hear a light tap on the glass of the outer door.

"Come in," he shouted mechanically. He was so astonished at an interruption that he forgot an incriminating bottle which stood in plain sight on his desk. He swung around, and there, of all people, was Ann.

"What has happened?"

"Nothing." She laughed, not quite naturally. "Peter thinks I have gone crazy! He wouldn't come up,—and anyway, he can't very well leave the mare."

"But why?" he broke off, at a loss.

"Why am I here? Because you kept me from making a mistake, once." She came forward a little on that, and Daniel, who had sprung to his feet, made a quick move to stand between her and the desk. He felt a trifle unsteady, but quite clear-headed.

"What is it, Ann?"

She was a little flushed, as she faced him. "I have been to a dinner party at the Bakers'," she began. "You know we don't often dine out these days, and I am away behind on gossip. . . . After dinner the women talked. . . . They said things—about you, and so, when Peter saw your light—" She paused, and Daniel had a sick premonition of what was coming, as she added quickly, "I didn't believe a word they said!"

"What did they say?"

"They said you were drinking, Daniel."

Lunt moved aside, and revealed the bottle on his desk. "Peter was right," he told her gravely, "you shouldn't have come."

"Then it is true." She made a little movement as if she would go, but she did not. She stood there, looking inexorable.

"It is true that I am drinking too much," Daniel admitted. "What else did they say of me?"

"I dare say it is all true," Ann told him, and she flung him a contemptuous glance.

"Women, I suppose?" he asked her bitterly, but she did not answer him. "Well, that's not so, at any rate. . . . I work like this almost every night. . . . Sometimes I just come up here and read,—and drink, of course. I don't want to excuse myself. . . . You'd better go down to Peter."

Ann's eyes softened again, and she came impulsively forward. She put her arm on Lunt's arm. "Why, Dan," she said, "you're miserably unhappy, aren't you?"

The young man looked at her starkly for a moment, and then he broke under her compassionate eyes. "God,—yes!" he blurted out, and flung himself into the chair before his desk. He buried his head on his arms, and sobs shook him strongly. He could feel her hands on his shoulders. . . . Her strong hands were holding him comfortingly.

In a moment he pulled himself together, and got to his feet, agonizingly embarrassed at his emotional betrayal. The whole poignant little scene had not taken two minutes. He could not meet Ann's candid gaze; he was too much ashamed of himself. He turned away from her, instead, and seizing the bottle on his desk, he dropped it out of the window. A thin tinkle of breaking glass came up from the void of the night.

"That's through with, anyway," Daniel said. "I hope it didn't hit Peter." He was making a gallant effort to recapture his usual manner. "I'll sign the pledge if you like."

Ann smiled mistily. "Let's just shake on it." She

put out her hand, and Lunt held it in his for a moment, looking seriously down on her. He was quite careless of the struggle ahead of him; he was thinking only of the boon of her friendship.

As he released her, sounds of heavy footsteps reached them, and the outer door crashed open. It was Peter, flushed and angry. "Dan, I think Ann's gone mad!" he shouted. "She saw your light and nothing would do but that we should make a call on you. . . . When I told her I wouldn't come, she said she'd go by herself, and when I stopped the mare and told her to go ahead, I'm damned if she didn't take me at my word!"

"I'm glad she did," his lawyer reassured him. "She gave me a jolt I don't mind saying I needed badly. I've sworn off, Pete."

Peter looked at his friend uncomfortably. He didn't half like having his wife mixed up in this sort of thing, even with Dan. "That's good," he said briefly. "Come on home, Ann. I have to be up by six."

Lunt closed his desk, and walked down the stairs with his friends. They parted, after Peter had unfastened his mare, and Daniel had helped Ann into the high-swung buggy. . . . As he walked toward the hotel the young lawyer's spirits were lighter than they had been in many days, and he was filled with excellent resolutions.

CHAPTER XXII

THE RETURN OF JEFFERSON

PETER wrote to Titus repeatedly after his magnificent intervention, but he never had an answer, and after a time he ceased his efforts, although he longed, in those depressed days in the business world, to be in touch with his friend's buoyant personality. He wanted, also, to be assured that Jefferson understood the money he had sent on was well and safely invested. Peter had no doubt as to the ultimate value of the securities he put it into, and when he thought of those handsome certificates stacked neatly away in his safe, awaiting the time when dividends should again be paid on them, he had a satisfying feeling of providing for his improvident friend's old age.

He looked up Virginia City, and found it to be a center of the Nevada mining development: fortunes were made and lost there overnight. The thing seemed extremely precarious to the steady manufacturer, and magnificent as Jefferson's present obviously was, Peter had more faith in his own eventual success than in his friend's. Nothing could quench his enthusiasm for the iron business,—not even a sagging market,—not even depressing reports of furnaces shutting down on every hand. He had, in spite of all discouragement, absolute faith.

Six months after his telegram arrived Titus turned up in person at the Smith and Jefferson plant. Peter

had been out on business, and returned to find his friend seated in the chair beside his desk. He looked amazingly exotic: he was too big for the place, and too extraordinarily tanned, and wind-blown, and wild. He had brought with him from the West an added flamboyancy: his tones roared louder; his laugh was cataclysmic. He looked amazingly well, although he was as thin as ever, and his blond hair was sunburned to the color of ashes. He exuded an air of undoubted prosperity.

"By God,—Pete!" he shouted when his friend came in. His voice echoed through the place. Every man working near the office stopped and looked up expectantly. Jefferson's great hand engulfed Peter's. He loomed over him expansively, beaming down on him with the utmost friendliness. "Gosh, I am glad to see you! How is business?"

Peter was gripping Jeff's hand hard. "Damn bad," he said, grinning up into his friend's face. "If it had not been for you, the Smith and Jefferson Company would have sunk long ago, and the Chicago National along with it."

"I never could see why you bothered about the bank; I thought you'd take my money, and become the steel rail king of the world."

Peter frowned. "A lot of our men had their savings in the Chicago National, and I felt responsible for them, being a director. I'm out of that now. I'm sticking to the iron business exclusively."

He looked Titus up and down. In addition to his general air of health and well-being, his friend fairly shouted prosperity: there was a diamond like a headlight in his cravat, and his watch-chain was a succession of gold nuggets strung together on a wire. His waistcoat was the gladdest thing Peter had seen in many a day. "You look as if you had cleaned up something," he said.

"I have. Fair and Mackey and I made a killing. It was a pity you didn't come with me, Pete. It's been exciting, too,—a damn lot of fun. One day broke;—another day riding on a bonanza!—How is Ann?"

"She's well."

"Children?"

"Growing up."

"Still living on South Western Plank Road?"

"No, I sold that house. We are in Mrs. Wilcox's old cottage on Loomis Street."

Peter thought Jeff's red face grew redder at that. "You don't say so! The old lady still living?"

"She has moved back east."

Jeff stood up, irresolutely, and moved over to the window. Pulling a cigar out of his waistcoat pocket, he fingered it nervously. Finally he coughed, and then said casually, "How is Susanna?"

"She is all right, and Dan is doing well."

"Susanna just the same?"

Peter had forgotten the gossip before Jeff left Chicago. "Yes.—She and Dan don't get on too well, though."

Jeff looked pleased at this indiscreet assertion. "Never did," he commented. "Dan is too slow for her. He always was. Susanna is a high flyer,—or would be if she had the money." He drew his large shambling frame resolutely together. "Let's go over to the club to lunch," he suggested.

It was not Peter's habit to take an hour off in the middle of his industrious day, but this was an occasion, and the two men climbed into his buggy and drove off toward town.

"Good horse," Jeff volunteered as Peter let the mare out. "She might have made the track."

"You haven't quit mining, have you?"

"I should say not," Titus responded enthusiastically. "It's the life for me!—Excitement all the time

—lose or win. . . . People going crazy all 'round you.—Going crazy yourself, I reckon. Buying stock on a rumor,—holding it on hope. God,—it's a man's life!"

Peter thought grimly that his was a man's life too. There was something essentially masculine in the clash of his great machines, and he smiled as he listened, saying nothing, apparently concentrated on his driving.

"I am worth a devil of a lot of money," Titus ran on. "I don't know what I could sell out for:—five million, maybe; maybe only half that." He broke off, and stared ahead of him, for a moment. "Pete, I don't know what to do with it," he then confessed. "I spend all I can but I don't make a dent in it. The other men are going to live in Frisco or New York, but there is nothing in that for me.—I'm desperate."

"Why don't you come back here?" Peter suggested.

"Because it is a working man's town and I'll never work again. Not me! . . . I've been living a wild life, and now I'd like to settle down and do something genteel with all this money,—but I don't know what,—or how."

"Pity you never married."

"Well, I don't know. I've seen a heap of fellows who struck it rich, and were tied to earth by an impossible woman they signed up with when they were young. You are in luck, Pete. Ann will always keep pace with you."

Peter looked pleased. "Yes," he said, "that's so."

"Why do you stick to the iron business when there is no money in it?"

"Because of its future," Peter told him indignantly. "Steel is bound to come back, and the man who holds on will make a killing, sooner or later."

"Gold for me," Titus declared. "It's the only metal I'll fool with."

At the club men gathered eagerly about Jefferson. The story of his intervention which had saved the

Chicago National was well known, and there was a general impression abroad that he was a man of property. He was questioned eagerly about the mining developments, and he answered enthusiastically, in tones which penetrated into the bar and brought men from that remote spot to listen to him. It was the romance of his generation which he gave them as he ate his luncheon.

"No,—no game for me," he interrupted himself to say parenthetically. "For a year in the mountains I lived on what I shot. I'll have some good old Lake Michigan white fish and a sirloin steak." He ate enormously, and with extraordinary gusto. The men about him were shriveled by contrast with him, and their reasonably restrained appetites seemed lady-like.

Daniel Lunt came in after a bit, and joined the circle about the returned hero. When he saw him Titus stopped for an instant in full flight; then he shook hands with him punctiliously. For a while after that his voice was not quite so loud, nor his flood of eloquence so voluminous.

Mr. Baker always lunched at the club. He was overjoyed when he saw Titus; he hailed him as an important stock holder, and as a great friend of the Chicago National. He sat trifling with his quail, and listening defensively to the prodigal's fantastic tales of gold-hunting. Gold! That commodity which lurked tamely in cellars, controlled by the banker's nod! . . . It was curious to hear it talked of as something that might be found here, there and anywhere, with a capacity to upset in a moment carefully arranged balances of the financial situation. He was fascinated, but he disapproved. He had a stern and puritanical feeling that there was gold enough in the world already, and in spite of his indebtedness to Titus Jefferson, he felt that he was somehow dangerous, sitting there talking about gold as if it were so much dirt. The old banker would as soon have cheapened God, as gold.

Jefferson invited Ann and Peter to dine with him that night, and regaled them magnificently in Kinsley's restaurant, where they ate course after course of a perfect dinner, and Peter drank enough wine to mellow the stern reality of his dreary business day. In the afternoon Titus had gone to see the children. He brought them expensive presents:—a music box which produced popular tunes for Annabel, a high bicycle for Hendricks, and a velocipede for Peets, as well as a handful of nuggets. Their new uncle made an instantaneous hit with them; it is possible that he would have done so even if he had not appeared as a glorified Santa Claus, for he had a way with children. He punched them in places very fruitful of delighted giggles, and three minutes after his arrival little Annabel, who was a serious child, not prone to take fancies to strangers, was sitting primly on his knees, while the boys were hanging about him listening breathlessly to stories of wildcats and bears, in mountains glorious with falls, and slips and avalanches, and of gold—it always came back to that—lying rich and shiny in the solid rock, in veins like those they could see under the skin of their slim wrists. Ann's heart warmed toward Titus; he charmed her as he did the children. She had never liked him better than she did that afternoon.

2

There was a concert in the evening, and after dinner Jefferson suggested going to it.

"I haven't heard any music since I left this town," he confessed. "As a matter of fact, I haven't read a book, either, and for a long time I never even saw a newspaper. All the interest I had in life was whether the vein was going to turn up or down, or whether it was going to peter out on me."

They heard the strains of the orchestra as they

entered Central Music Hall, and Ann could see that Jefferson was immediately excited. "That sound goes right up and down my spinal column," he said. "A fellow out in camp used to play the fiddle, but his pieces weren't much."

Christine Nielsen sang that night, and the place was crowded. Notice of Jefferson's return had circulated through the audience, and when they came in there was a little flutter of movement. Ann was glad that she had worn her best dress, for every one was looking at their box. Jefferson was very fine in his evening clothes: too fine, she thought, with a little smile too tender to be really critical. He moved about a great deal during the music, and his chair creaked, but when Nielsen sang, the great restless creature sat as still as a mouse, his eyes fixed adoringly on her. He was fascinated by her. He was tremendously moved in some soft and susceptible recess of his being. He was another man, looking at her.

In the intermission men crowded into the box to shake Jefferson by the hand and welcome him back, but he made short work of them. He became restless again, and strode out into the foyer back of the seats, where other friends impeded his progress by their salutations. He strode about laughing mechanically, and talking with his customary violence, but his eyes were never still. . . . His great height enabled him to see over the heads of the crowd. He was looking for some one, but it was not until the bell rang at the end of the intermission that suddenly and unexpectedly he ran into Susanna. She was standing with a little group of men about her, laughing somewhat feverishly, and talking with an animation that was almost wild. She was rather more daringly dressed than the other women, and she looked extraordinarily pretty. Her eyes met Jefferson's and she paled visibly. In an instant he was shaking hands with her.

"I heard you were in town," she said. After the briefest glance she would not look at him, but she trembled with the excitement of the encounter.

Titus unceremoniously slipped his hand into her arm and drew her away. "Have you missed me?" he asked, bending over her.

She flashed an indignant glance at him. "All this time," she said, "and not a word from you!"

"I can't write letters, Susanna. I hate 'em. . . . And I'll be honest with you: when I got away from you I made up my mind to try to forget you. . . . But I couldn't." He had taken her to the far end of the lobby, a place of comparative isolation, and she was blocked off from the crowd by his tall figure.

"I thought you were dead," she said, and suddenly, to her consternation, her eyes filled with tears.

Her companion was immediately inflated by her telltale emotion. "Don't you love me any more, honey?" he asked, leaning his face closer to hers. "That is what I came back to find out."

She wanted enormously to tell him that she didn't. She recalled harshly those days and weeks and months of watching for a letter in every mail, and always in vain. . . . She remembered when she had first heard the story of his saving the Chicago National, which told her that he was alive, and that nothing had happened to him except that unquestionably he had forgotten her. That was worse than thinking he had died on some cold mountainside. She had no illusions after that,—no hope that in spite of all indications to the contrary, he had really loved her.

"Four years," she said sadly.

Bitterness came into Titus' ardent face. "I was a fool to think a woman could remember as long as that!"

Susanna drew up her slim young figure, and faced him. "The only thing that remains," she told him indignantly, "is for you to reproach me! Was it I who

left you? . . . Was it I who dropped out of your life? I stayed here, waiting,—living a life I hate,—no joy in it,—no hope in it! And what about you? What have you been doing all the time?"

Titus met her look squarely. "Honey," he said, "whether you believe it or not, I have been loving you. I did my best not to; I tried about every cure, but I couldn't forget you. Other women were just poor imitations of you. . . . At best they only reminded me of you and made me crazy for you. . . . You know I said I wouldn't come back until I made a killing? Well, I've done that, and now I've come to take you away with me. You can live like a princess! Will you go?"

She looked apprehensively at him, with lovely parted lips. People were hurrying through the lobby to their seats, but the two in the distant corner paid no attention to them. "I am afraid," she said.

"Of Daniel?"

"Of you. I had forgotten Daniel."

"You can't be afraid of me, honey," Titus said tenderly. "Don't you remember the times we had together? . . . I've thought about them all the while I was away from you. Don't you remember, Susanna?"

Susanna had turned very white. She stood with her hands behind her, clinging to the wall for support. "Yes," she said, "I remember. I've always remembered."

"Well?"

She looked at him in complete and unguarded surrender. "I'll do anything you say."

"We'll go away to-morrow."

Susanna shivered a little. "Away?" she repeated.

"I've got to have you with me. I want you there all the time. . . . I want to eat breakfast with you. . . . We'll have adventures. We'll go abroad. We'll see the world. There's nothing I won't do for you,—

but it's got to be everything or nothing. Will you come?"

She looked at him with intense and shining eyes. "Do you think I would let you leave me again?" she said.

3

The following evening, as Ann and Peter were reading the evening paper after dinner, Nora tapped on the door, and put her head inside to say, "Mr. Lunt is here, ma'am."

Daniel followed her immediately. He shut the door carefully behind him before he said anything, and when he turned Ann exclaimed at the drawn look on his face. "What has happened?"

His eyes met hers bleakly. "Susanna has left me," he said, flushing.

"Dan!"

Peter went over and laid his arm clumsily about his friend's shoulders. "Pshaw!" he said. "She will come back. It's just a womanish idea."

Ann knew better. She had not forgotten the gossip three years ago, and besides that she had a premonition.

Lunt said slowly, "No, she won't come back. She has gone with Titus Jefferson."

Peter fell away from him. "Nonsense! I don't believe a word of it." He had always liked Susanna.

"How do you know, Dan?" It was Ann's voice, cool and level.

Lunt's flush deepened. "She left me a note," he said.

There was a long pause in the room, broken by Ann. "Poor thing! Poor silly Susanna!"

Peter said heavily, "I am amazed at Titus. Amazed!"

Daniel laughed shortly. "Are you?" he said. "I'm not. I'm not even amazed at Susanna. I am

more amazed at myself than at any one else. . . . By all the rules of the game, I should be out looking for Jefferson with a shot-gun,—but I can't get rid of feeling that the whole mess is partly my own fault."

"Nonsense!" Peter interjected, "nothing can excuse them! Nothing!"

"I never was her kind of man. . . . It was no good." Lunt's broken voice ceased. He sat hunched forward in his chair, his moody eyes on the floor.

Ann sprang to her feet and crossed over to him. She ached to do something for him, and reaching timidly out, she patted his shoulder affectionately. "I am so sorry, Dan," she said futilely.

Lunt's set face quivered under her tenderness; it almost broke him up. He was acutely conscious of Peter's presence, and that he must not make a fool of himself before another man. He caught Ann's hand and pressed it in both of his. He managed to smile at her reassuringly. "I came over here to-night, because if I hadn't, I should have got boiling drunk, but now I'm all right," he said.

Peter, always stung to action by bad tidings, was striding about the room. "What are you going to do? What the devil is there for you to do?"

"I have been asking that of myself."

Peter stopped in his stride and looked questioningly across the room. "You wouldn't take her back, I suppose?"

"No," Lunt said. "We may as well be honest: I don't want her. What I do want is to find the right way out of this thing for her, if there is one. If Jefferson will marry her, I'll do all I can to bring it about."

"You mean you will divorce her?"

"I'll let her divorce me on any damn grounds. I want her to know that. I thought, Pete, perhaps you would go to Titus?"

Peter recoiled at that. "I?"

Lunt smiled ruefully. "You don't enjoy the prospect? I shouldn't in your place,—but you have influence with Jefferson. Susanna must be persuaded to leave him for a time,—until she is free. The stiffer she is of course the more chance she will have, with a man like Jefferson; if he thinks he can't have her, he'll do anything to get her. I could advise her if she were my client, but as things are, I must keep out of it. You and Ann are nearer to her than any one else. She would be certain to listen to you."

"I would be no good on a mission like that."

"Peter is right," Ann intervened unexpectedly, and both men looked at her in amazement. "He wouldn't do a thing but storm around about being moral, and that wouldn't do any good. . . . Titus is the most soft-hearted creature in the world. . . . If some one goes to him who can touch him, he'd marry Susanna,—or any one,—just to be agreeable. But Peter wouldn't touch him; he would only fight with him. . . . It isn't a case for a man. . . . I'll go, Dan,—if you want me to."

"You'll do nothing of the sort!" Peter shouted, outraged, and Daniel Lunt made a gesture of shocked protest.

"I don't want you to be mixed up in this," he said decidedly.

"How silly you are,—both of you! Just because Susanna and Titus have done something bad, you think it is a case for men to handle and women to let alone, even though a woman's whole life is at stake. . . . You'll have to let me go, Peter. Susanna will listen to me when she might not to any one else, because she knows I am fond of her, and Titus will, too, I am sure. We have been good friends, and he has always been fond of the children. . . . It can't hurt me to see them. . . . You agree with that, don't you, Dan? It won't—smirch me—to go?"

"I believe nothing could smirch you, Ann," Daniel said hoarsely.

"Does any one know where they are?"

"I had a note from Titus to-day," Peter said. "He told me that he was going to Saratoga Springs for a while, and that he was thinking of sailing for Europe later."

"I shall go to Saratoga Springs, then. I shall tell Susanna, Dan, that you are the most generous person I have ever seen. . . . Peter wouldn't be half as good, I know that."

"Don't talk nonsense," Peter said gruffly, and his wife smiled secretly.

"How silly men are," she thought.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE FATE OF SUSANNA

It was late afternoon when Ann arrived in Saratoga Springs. She was a little abashed at the fashionable aspect of the crowd which surged about the station platform: the ladies in their fresh toilets made her feel very grimy after her long journey on the train. She found the bus from the hotel where Titus was stopping, and took refuge within it. Now that her unwelcome interview loomed ahead of her, she found herself dreading it acutely. What should she say? What appeal could she make to them,—those two desperate people who had burned their bridges in so lurid a fire? She felt miserably inadequate to her self-imposed task.

She was given a room on the court, in the big red brick hotel. The colored bell boy put down her bag with a flourish, opened the door leading to the outside balcony, and departed. Ann went to look over the railing. Below her a square of green was enclosed by the wings of the hotel, diagonal paths ran across it, and in the center a fountain made a soft plash, plash, of falling water. The place was planted with tall elm trees; she could look straight into the sturdy green foliage of the one nearest to her. Children were playing down below, and their high inflexible voices came up to her. She smiled automatically. Her children at home sounded like that. . . . She wondered what

they could be doing. . . . She wondered if they were thinking of her. She hoped they were, for she missed them acutely: there was something in her uncomfortable situation which made her want them with her.

She had seen on the register, "Mr. and Mrs. Titus Jefferson" written in a bold sprawling handwriting, but she was uncertain as to her next move. She wanted to be wise, and at the same time she felt this was less a case for wisdom than for inspiration. What if Susanna should refuse to see her? She decided to look the ground over before she took further steps.

She felt rather shy when she went down to dinner. The vast corridors overwhelmed her, and the ever-present consciousness of her mission made her miserable. She asked the head waiter for an inconspicuous table, and sat down in a far corner, filled with the fear that before she had an opportunity of reaching them, her guilty friends might see her there. She saw no one she knew, but the possibility of it kept her from enjoying the extraordinarily ample table d'hôte dinner which the colored waiter spread opulently before her.

In the evening there was dancing in the ballroom on the first floor, and Ann wandered down the porch to look in at it through one of the long windows. The room was a lovely sight. It was very high, and the walls were covered with large mirrors elaborately framed in white and gold. Between them light blue damask with a silver sheen on it was hung, and around the edges of the pale and shining floor stood gilded chairs of a fashionable, semi-Egyptian design. Hundreds of frosted globes shone in elaborate glass chandeliers, and in brackets on the wall. The ladies looked very pretty in the midst of all this bright elegance, and the men very brave and dashing. It was everything that a ballroom should be.

As she stood looking in at it, Ann wondered where Susanna might be at that moment, and if she could,

in remote and guilty privacy, hear the orchestra playing a waltz to which she had often danced in Chicago. She forgot all about her actual surroundings in thinking of this, and did not recall them until all at once she caught sight of a familiar figure in the nearest doorway. It was Titus Jefferson, and he was, surprisingly but evidently, having a very good time. There was a lady with him, whose face Ann could not at first see, but a glance told her that she was dressed in the height of the style. She wore one of the new-fashioned frocks which tied back tightly about a slim and lovely figure, behind which the drapery was massed. . . . She turned; it was Susanna. Her hair was elaborately dressed, and brilliant diamond ear-rings hung on either side of her flushed excited face. The thing that struck Ann with extraordinary force was that she was indubitably happy. . . . There was no doubting it. . . . She could find no trace of the shame and misery which she had conventionally assumed must attend a woman in Susanna's unfortunate position. Reckless she might be, and callous, and even morally insensible, but she was obviously intoxicated with happiness. Looking in at her from her position on the porch, Ann was nearer envy than any other sensation. She felt dead, watching her.

The lovers danced together. Titus was a poor waltzer, but when he blundered he looked down into Susanna's face and laughed, and she shot him back a glance which carried, in the flicker of an eyelid, a secret amusement and a penetrating joy. They were both of them highly animated, and Susanna, particularly, gave the impression of being tremblingly alive. Looking in at her, decked in her new beauty, mobile and susceptive beyond anything she had ever seen in her, Ann realized that her work was cut out for her. She wondered if she could persuade this awakened creature to leave her lover and take on the leth-

argy and suspended animation of long and uncertain waiting. She doubted whether she herself, were she in Susanna's place, would listen. She realized, shivering a little in the cool air on the porch, that there were times in desperate lives when the present obliterated everything:—when the past and the future were as non-existent as though human beings had no memory and no hope. . . . At the moment she could do nothing, and she went up-stairs to her room.

There was something upsetting in the flagrant joy of Susanna and Titus. In the outlawed light of it her own life seemed brutally drab. . . . The atmosphere of Saratoga Springs recalled poignantly that which she had known in her youth. . . . It was gay and exciting. She leaned over the balcony and looked down into the shadowy court where dim figures came and went, and where the glare from an open door caught here the sheen of a light dress, or there a white expanse of a shirt-front, startling in the dusk.

If she had never married Peter she might at this moment have been dancing down-stairs. . . . If she had married Hendricks Rensselaer, she would have been a part of the gay New York group which made Saratoga Springs fashionable. Hendricks had been a blundering lover, but to-night she could not help wondering what life with him would actually have been like. She knew that she could have led him, but she realized, with a shrug, that she wouldn't have wanted to. She would have been bored to death with him. She would have hated him before the honeymoon was over.

Putting her elbows on the rail and resting her chin on her hands, she thought, seriously and uninterruptedly, and for a long time, about her life. . . . She had not been bored with Peter at the end of their brief honeymoon. . . . She looked back with an impersonal and amused tenderness at the early years of her

marriage. . . . Impossible to be happier than she had been then! The memory of it was the strongest thing in her life. It was stronger, even, than her affection for her children, and it had a much firmer hold on her than any merely moral precept. She wondered if that lovely lost glamour could have been saved. . . . The tragedy of her life was that it had not been. . . . Standing there, really alone for the first time since her marriage, Ann could not keep her mind on the momentous interview ahead of her, because of sorrow for the wreck of her own emotional life. She was not angry with Peter; rather she was filled with a sense of deep hopelessness in regard to their relations. Tonight, stirred and awakened by her intimate glimpse of her friend's illicit happiness, she wondered how long she would be able to endure the aridity of her own life. She was only thirty, she thought, regretfully. She had it in her heart to wish that she were twice that.

2

The following day dawned clear and bright. Ann was up early, awakened by the stir in the hotel, but she did not follow the general example and walk out to take the waters. She was afraid of a scene, should she unexpectedly and publicly meet the lovers. She decided to make an effort to see Titus alone before she talked to Susanna. She must know from him how things stood before she tried to snatch from her friend the evanescent and shining happiness which had so disturbed her the night before. On her way to breakfast she sent Jefferson a little note. It took her some time to write it, although it was very brief.

"Dear Titus:

"I wish you would come down to talk to me. I will be in the court at ten o'clock. If possible, say nothing to Susanna. "Ann."

She seated herself on the most inconspicuous bench which she could find, but it was not, she felt, nearly retired enough in case Titus became abusive, which she was quite prepared for. It seemed to her likely that the nursemaids, who were the chief occupants of the court at that hour, were in all probability about to be enlivened by a dramatic interview.

A little after ten Titus came out of the hotel. As he stood in the full sunlight, looking about for her, he was, Ann thought, rather a splendid type. He was dressed for the races, with glasses strung across his sporting top coat, and he had a sunny quality of well-being which made people smile when they looked at him. When he saw Ann he came leaping over to her. He was, she thought, really glad to see her.

"I didn't know if you would ever speak to me again!" he told her. "What are you doing here?" He sat down beside her, leaning toward her, attentive but embarrassed.

"Of course, plenty of people would think that I should not be speaking to you now," Ann reminded him. "But I came all the way east to do it. Daniel Lunt wanted Peter to come, but I knew that you two would just storm at each other and get nowhere." She let her eyes rest on his for a moment. "I knew you wouldn't storm at me," she said confidently.

"Never, Ann!" Titus assured her, leaning nearer her as he spoke. "I am a rascal, I know, but whatever you want I will do. What is it?"

"I want to know what is going to happen to Susanna."

Titus treated this problem with enormous ease. "Oh, I will look after that," he said with an air of finality which made Ann realize that he would be glad to dispose of the whole matter by this easy assertion.

She struggled against a rising irritation. "I know you will, Titus," she said. "I have said so all along.

. . . Of course there is only one thing you can do for her, and that is,—marry her."

She was relieved to see that her companion seemed willing enough to consider this legitimate end to his romantic episode. He nodded with rather more seriousness than he ordinarily showed, and said, "What is Lunt's position in the matter?" He flushed a little with his reluctant mention of Daniel's name.

"He will do anything he can. He is willing to let Susanna divorce him,—indeed, he recommends it, because if she brings the suit she can marry immediately after getting the decree. It is generous of him, I think."

"Yes," Titus admitted. "He is a good fellow, Dan Lunt is,—but not the man for Susanna. Never was. . . . What is the plan, Ann? Let's have it all."

"No one knows Susanna has gone with you, Titus,—no one but Peter and me, and of course you can count on us to say nothing. Daniel says she should get a lawyer, and he will cook up some kind of a case with him so that she can bring suit. Of course she will have to leave you, and come back to Chicago until it is all over."

"She won't like that," Titus interposed.

"No," Ann said, "she will hate it,—but you will have to make her do it, Titus. You know as well as I do that it is the only thing for her in the circumstances."

Titus moved irritably about on his half of the bench.

"I am not sure," he said gloomily. "It is damn decent of Lunt, but I hate to ask it of him. . . . Now that I know he won't oppose it, I have another idea in mind about a divorce. . . . I'll let you know about it, Ann, when I've thought it over, and if it will make you feel any easier, I'll give you my word of honor that I will marry Susanna. . . . Why, damn it, Ann, I want to. I should have done it anyway when she was free, even if you hadn't come down here to talk to me about it,—only I might have left it drift for a while. But I can see now it is not a thing a man wants to be careless

about." He stood up, towering over her. "Let's shake on it," he said, holding out his huge hand. Ann gave him hers, trustingly; she believed him fully.

"If you want to see Susanna," Titus said, "you will find her up-stairs in her room. I don't know if she will be glad to see you, Ann. She won't like your trying to separate us."

Ann said resignedly, "I expected you both to hate me." She looked up at Titus and was amazed to see that this statement actually brought tears to his eyes.

"I couldn't hate you," he assured her. "You are just a sort of good angel, coming here like this. I mean well by Susanna. I always intended to marry her if Dan divorced her, but, you know, I might have overlooked it. I couldn't do that now that I have shaken hands on it with you, Ann. You will trust me, won't you?"

He was so comically upset that Ann couldn't help liking him in spite of the fact that he was, by every tenet of her upbringing, a wicked man. She wondered if, when seen close to, sin always seemed like that,—a thing of amazing naturalness.

When Ann entered Susanna's room in answer to a languid "Come in," she found her friend sitting up in bed, her pretty hair in disorder, surrounded by a mass of fashion magazines. There were flowers here and there about a huge apartment. It had a gay look, in spite of the disheveled appearance which various frivolous garments, flung over chairs, gave to it.

Susanna did not say a word when she saw who the intruder was; she simply flinched back into the pillows and lay looking at her with stony eyes. There was terror in her look,—and stubborn, determined resistance. Ann didn't speak, either. She couldn't. She found this desperate silence extraordinarily touching.

"What are you here for?" Susanna finally asked her hoarsely. "What made you come?"

Ann's eyes filled with inconvenient tears. "Oh, my dear, I came because I am so fond of you," she managed to murmur. Still she did not dare venture away from her position by the door. Susanna had a hunted look, and she felt like a brute, confronting her.

At her friend's words, however, the culprit suddenly went to pieces. She flung herself over in the bed and buried her head in the pillows. Sobs shook her light frame, and she made pitiful little sounds of weeping. In an instant Ann was beside her: she was sitting on that guilty bed, endeavoring to comfort her. In a few moments Susanna again became sufficiently calm to be vocal. "Why did you come?" she sobbed. "It is no use."

Ann said nothing at all. She had drawn her friend close to her, and she could feel the wild beating of her heart. She was tremendously sorry for her. . . . She waited to see what would happen next. . . . All at once Susanna stiffened in her arms, and turned her tear wet face toward Ann. "I won't give him up!" she said with extraordinary passion. "And you can say what you like, do what you like,—I won't go back to Daniel! Never! Never!"

"There is no question of that," Ann assured her. How could she think, this pretty broken toy, that Daniel would want her back? "I came on to tell you, Susanna, that Daniel will let you divorce him. He will take all the blame. He wants you to be free to marry Titus."

Susanna's wide eyes had a look of added terror at this announcement. "Marriage!" She hesitated, with a catch in her breath like a sobbing child. "I have not dared to talk to him about that."

"I have," Ann assured her confidently. "I talked to him about it this morning. He expects to marry you as soon as you get a divorce."

Susanna held her tightly. "Did he say that, Ann? Did he say that?" she asked breathlessly. "Do you really think he will do it?"

Ann wondered at her. How could she, in this abasement of uncertainty, have looked as radiant as she had the night before? She struggled with a feeling of contempt. "I know he will, Susanna," she assured her.

At this the little creature again burst into floods of tears. She, too, told Ann that she was her good angel, and that there never had been so true a friend, but when she knew that in order to get a divorce from her husband, she would be obliged to leave Titus and return to Chicago, she balked apprehensively. "I don't dare do that. He left me once, and for four years I never heard a word from him. I couldn't bear that now. I couldn't stand it, Ann!"

In spite of her efforts Ann could get no assurance that she would do as Daniel Lunt had advised. "I will talk to Titus about it," Susanna kept repeating apprehensively. "You don't know what you are asking me to do! Later on I will tell you."

Finally Ann went away and left her still undecided. She was afraid that Titus might return, and she disliked the idea of meeting him in that betraying room. It was better, she decided, to maintain all the fastidiousness she could in their relations. . . . She went to her own room and packed her bag, as she hoped to leave on the afternoon train. She counted confidently on Titus persuading Susanna that the thing to do was to take advantage of her husband's generosity. She had every expectation of bringing the culprit back to Chicago with her.

Her mind was, however, more occupied with Daniel Lunt than with his erring wife. She was beginning to realize what he would be in for, with a divorce suit of the sort he offered Susanna an opportunity to bring. It would be horrid, Ann thought, with a little shiver of distaste. There would be great feeling against him, and a lot of unpleasant talk. She wished that it were all over, and Susanna safely remarried. She realized that

with a man of Titus' temperament, there was an infinite number of possible slips between the cup and the lip.

3

Immediately after luncheon she sent Susanna a note, asking her to let her know when she wished to see her. There was no answer, although she waited in her characterless little room, fearing to go out lest she might miss it. The time for the afternoon train came and went, and still there was no word. Ann began to be nervous. She didn't want to rush matters, and yet she felt that this delay was ominous. Finally she decided to make the move herself, and wrote another note, this time to Titus, saying that she would like to see him as soon as convenient.

Very quickly the boy who took the note returned with it. "Yo' friends is gone, ma'am," he told Ann. "They left here on the afternoon train."

Ann was stunned. She felt by no means as efficient as when she volunteered to take on the work of an emissary. She had failed, and nothing remained to do but to go back and admit it. She recalled Susanna,—trembling, frightened, susceptible,—with the greatest regret. She could not imagine what would now happen to her. She could only fear the worst.

4

There was nothing further to do in the situation. Daniel could not suggest anything, and he took no steps toward getting a divorce. . . . Ann gathered that he did not expect to hear from his wife again until Jefferson had thrown her off, but she was more optimistic: she could not help believing that Titus would keep his word with her. In the face of his action it was impossible to convince any one else of it, however, and she

did not try to. . . . She merely waited, and in the meantime gave support to Daniel's statement that his wife had gone away on a visit.

The guilty pair simply dropped out, as Titus had done once before. They disappeared, and no one knew where they were. They vanished into the unknown.

Three months after Susanna's disappearance, Daniel received an envelope, post-marked Portland, Oregon. It was addressed in a large sprawling handwriting, which was vaguely familiar to him. He opened it to find that it contained a newspaper clipping only. With the most idle curiosity he began to read it. He had no intimation that it concerned him.

Judge Walker of the Circuit Court yesterday granted a decree of divorce to Mrs. Susanna W. Lunt from her husband, Daniel Lunt, on the grounds of cruelty. Mrs. Lunt, who formerly lived in Chicago and now resides at Portland, testified in her own behalf. Her charges were confirmed by the testimony of two other witnesses. Attorney James R. Keene represented the complainant.

The clipping was no more than an inch and a half long, yet there was the whole of Susanna's future provided for. There was Daniel's freedom and an ending to the ambiguous situation which had begun to irk him justifiably. He read it again, and, alone in the sanctuary of his office, he began to laugh. He laughed uncontrollably, with a touch of something which, in a less masculine person, might have been hysteria.

It was clear enough to him what had happened. He had never been in Oregon in his life nor had he had any notice of the pendency of the suit. Titus Jefferson was not a man to stop at trifles. If affidavits were needed that the residence of "said Daniel Lunt was wholly unknown to affiant," and that there-

fore personal service could not be made on him, Titus would see that an "affiant" would be produced who would do his duty. Service by publication of notice in a newspaper was the next step, and then a "decree" by default. A decree based on fraud, which Daniel could rip wide open if he wished. But he did not so wish. For all of him that decree could stand to the end of time.

5

A week later Ann had a telegram from San Francisco which read:

"Married Titus yesterday. Will always remember your kindness. Susanna Jefferson."

CHAPTER XXIV

SUCCESS REGAINED

PETER went through disheartened moments during the three years of industrial depression which followed the panic, for half the stacks in the country went out of blast, and he never knew but that another month would see him forced to close down. It was the fact that he could make cheap steel which saved him, as there was a steady demand for steel rails to use in replacement work, and Peter's early experimenting had taught him enough to enable him to underbid his competitors. There was no profit in these orders, but they enabled him gradually to work off the raw materials with which he was loaded up, and to reduce the store of pig-iron which threatened to ruin him.

He worked mercilessly hard, but he was happier when he was dog-tired than he would have been had he given himself more time for reflection. He set up a cot in the corner of his office, and on the nights when he worked late over his books he slept there. The Spartan discomfort of such a makeshift eased his ever-present sense of humiliation, and he could almost have been said to enjoy it.

His relations with Ann were by no means so simple as she assumed. Every word of her arraignment of him was imprinted indelibly upon his memory, and the devastating sight of her sleeping in the guest room was one he found impossible to forget. He wanted enor-

mously to forget it, and to reestablish his old casual and happy touch with his wife, but the specter of her just disdain prevented it.

He did not know why she had changed her mind about leaving him. He only knew that after a terrible day of doubt, when he purposely left her alone so that she might be free to act as she chose, he had come back to his house to find her waiting for him as usual. The relief of it had made him feel momentarily ill. It had choked him so that he could not speak, but he felt that to be as well, as otherwise he might have burst into incautious speech. She had remained:—why, he never knew, nor cared to know. What he felt he must concern himself with, was seeing that she did not regret it.

It went hard with him at that moment, when he longed to make her life acceptable, to be obliged to ask her to retrench, and in his effort to make up for it he effaced himself as much as possible. He said to himself he would ask nothing of her beyond the boon of her continued presence in his house, and while he did not actually live up to this resolution, his demands of an intimate nature were few. He schooled himself to kiss her coldly, as if he were insensible to her charm, and he made no effort to invade the privacy of her thoughts.

Being human, Peter looked forward to a time when this unhappy situation would cease, and being concrete, he fixed his hopes upon the day when he should be able to restore his wife's inheritance. He had a list of the securities which he had sacrificed, and it was his intention to buy them back. They became a symbol to him.

2

When prosperity at length evidenced itself in a sudden speculative demand for iron in the fourth year

following the panic, he rejoiced, but he did not tell Ann anything about it. He had for so long looked forward to a sudden and stunning announcement of entire restitution, that he could not bring himself to take the edge off his triumph by giving her his good news in driblets.

When fortune came it came with a rush. In no time at all Peter had more orders than he could fill, and his plant had in it once more the heartening urge of haste. He ran twenty-four-hour shifts again, and took on his full quota of workmen. He drank deep of success.

At the annual meeting he delighted his directors by showing a profit which warranted a twenty per cent. dividend on the Smith and Jefferson stock. It became a hilarious occasion, which adjourned to the club for dinner. The good news spread, and men surrounded Peter, congratulating him and proclaiming him a great man. He drank champagne and thought, himself, that he was by no means undersized.

All the time, however, he had his eye on the clock. What did he care about these jubilant acquaintances who made much of him now that he had filled their pockets? What interested him was Ann, and he meant to go to her the moment he was sure that the children would be safely in bed. He wanted her alone, for the interview he had planned for so long. . . . He found her sitting under the lamp in the parlor. She had an open book in her lap, but she was not reading. There was a big basket of mending on the table, but she was not sewing. She simply sat there, very quietly, apparently lost in thought, and Peter had a sudden stabbing realization of the fact that she looked ill, and older than she should.

She heard him at the door, and rousing herself, smiled. "You are late," she said. "We waited supper as long as we could. Have you had anything to eat?"

"Yes, at the club."

"You look as if it had done you good."

"Annie, I have something to tell you."

She looked at him in surprise. She could scarcely remember his ever having said those simple words. She supposed there must be more bad luck, and braced herself for it. "Yes?"

"It is good news," Peter said hastily. "We have had a good year. I can pay you back in the morning."

"Pay me back? You don't owe me anything."

"The money you inherited from Mr. Cortlandt. . . . Don't you understand?"

She didn't understand in the least; Peter's words seemed to make no sense at all. What was it he was saying?

"Our hard times are over!"

She shrank from his triumphant advance. She had not seen Peter like this in years; she was afraid of him, as she might have been of a stranger. She shook her head, feebly, and he paused. He stood looming over her.

"I've made forty thousand dollars in dividends this year, Annie!" He was trying to drive his prosperity home,—to penetrate her dazed lethargy. "We'll move. We'll build a house over on Prairie Avenue!"

At this definite statement, Ann rose from her chair, and clung to him giddily. "Do you mean that we are going to be rich again?" she demanded breathlessly.

"We're not going to be. We are!" Peter could wait no longer. He swept her into a close embrace. He felt young again, and ardent.

All at once he realized that Ann lay relaxed in his arms. He held her away from him. . . . She was crying, and the thrilling sweep of his mood was broken. "What is the matter?" he asked harshly.

Ann could not answer him, nor could she have said why she cried. Certainly it was the last thing she

wanted to do, but at the suddenness of Peter's good tidings, the stern barrier which she had interposed between herself and any expression of her real feelings gave way and she was helpless in the grasp of hysteria. Her tears were falling in floods. . . . She knew that she was destroying Peter's triumph, but she could not control herself. . . . She wanted to laugh, even while she was convulsed by sobs. She had never felt like that before; it frightened her.

It frightened Peter, also: almost at once his chagrin was forgotten in concern. He tried to comfort Ann,—to soothe her,—but to no avail. He had never seen any one cry like that. . . . He carried her over to the sofa, but she clung to him with frantic, irrational hands, and it was a long time before she was sufficiently quieted for him to leave her while he ran around the corner for the doctor.

By the time he came back, Ann had dried her eyes, and was thoroughly ashamed of herself. Doctor Whipple seemed to find nothing extraordinary in the situation. He sat down beside the sofa and talked paternally of a rest and change, and recommended her going to bed at once.

With Peter he was more expansive. "You forget what a strain she has been through, Smith. . . . And I dare say you surprised her with your good news."

"Yes," Peter said somewhat grimly, "I did."

"In the course of a long life I have come to a conclusion that surprises are almost invariably a mistake," the doctor said musingly. "And yours was evidently too much for your wife. Her nerves are in bad shape,—that is obvious. She'll have to get away for a while."

"Away?" Peter echoed blankly.

"A few months would set her up."

"A few months?"

"You can't cure tired nerves in a minute."

Peter turned this over in his mind. "I suppose she might take the children to the White Mountains."

Doctor Whipple frowned. "She has had enough of the children," he said decidedly. "What she needs is to get a complete change,—mental as well as physical. She needs to have some fun. I suppose there would be no possibility of your taking her to Europe? A foreign tour would be just the thing."

"I should say not," Peter replied. "The next six months will see the biggest business that the Smith and Jefferson Company has ever done, and I'll be at the plant twelve or fifteen hours every day. . . . I suppose Annie might like to go to Europe," he added thoughtfully.

"It would be the best thing she could do," Doctor Whipple insisted.

"Josephus Baker and his wife are sailing in a fortnight. She could go over with them. How long do you think she ought to stay?"

"Well, I should say three months would do the trick."

"All right," Peter agreed gloomily. "Of course if she has to go she has to go. I'll speak to Mr. Baker."

But Ann would not listen to the idea of going abroad. "How could I leave the children?" she asked indignantly.

As the days dragged on, however, and she continued to feel miserably nervous and let down, she began secretly to think more favorably of the idea. A lassitude resembling that she had known after the loss of her baby laid hold of her, and frightened her. Life had no keen edges any more; her reactions had no poignancy.

"I feel as though I had taken a narcotic," she told Doctor Whipple, and he assured her that after a few days on the sea she would be another woman.

She felt that was something immensely to be de-

sired. Dimly, through the fog of her prostration, she perceived that she had cruelly disappointed Peter, but she could not arouse herself sufficiently to do anything about it. The thought of escape became very tempting, and gradually the trip began to seem probable. Mrs. Baker came to see her, and awoke a faint curiosity in her by her talk of foreign cities. Peter secured steamship accommodations without her consent, and when they were once bought, the voyage all at once became inevitable. She roused herself sufficiently to get some necessary clothes; merely being dressed again in new and pretty frocks did something to elevate her spirit, and make the foreign tour seem more possible. Until the very day of her departure, she had fits of declaring that she was not really going, but when the time came she did go. There was a conspiracy against her in the matter, and she was in too low a condition to oppose it.

CHAPTER XXV

THE FOREIGN TOUR

THE travelers arrived in New York only a day before they sailed. Ann had not been there since she had departed precipitately with Peter, directly after their marriage. . . . She thought about that all the way along the Hudson River. . . . She remembered, with a touch of poignancy, how she and her husband had sat looking at that same view, their arms now and then touching, thrillingly. Impossible that she should have married any one but Peter! No matter how it had turned out, no matter what shattered dreams that foolish bride had never realized, he was the inevitable mate. . . . That, she thought, her eyes misted with tears, was the pity of it. She could not even imagine anything more satisfactory than what she had had.

She pulled herself up at that. She didn't want to criticize Peter. . . . She recalled his dumb distress at parting, when he stood beside the train looking up at her on the car platform. His inarticulateness always touched her, and she was touched now, recalling it. . . . He had been good to let her go. . . . She knew husbands who wouldn't have been so complaisant about being deserted,—but after all, other wives meant more to other husbands than she did to hers. . . . The river blurred again, and she turned resolutely to her book, Hare's *Walks in London,* which Daniel Lunt had given her.

It was glaringly hot in New York, and the drive to the Fifth Avenue Hotel was oppressive. The horses which pulled the travelers' carriage were dark with sweat, and the driver sat on his box with his knees wide apart and his coat and waistcoat open. His face was scarlet behind the fierce sweep of his mustache.

"They tell me that the 'Fifth Avenue' is not the thing any longer," Mr. Baker said, as they drew up before the hotel's discreet portals, "but I confess that I like to go where I am known." He was known; at that hotel even a western banker was treated with respect.

Ann could not speak; she was strangled with ancient memories. Here, as a young girl, she had come with Mr. Cortlandt to war meetings. . . . Up that very grand staircase confronting her she had swept, young and thrilled, to a dinner given by the Italian who had courted her. . . . She hadn't seen an ambassador since, she reflected.

Her windows overlooked Madison Park. . . . She wondered who lived in the houses surrounding the little square. She could remember going to a ball in one of them. . . . Another had been the home of some girl whose name she couldn't recall. Was it possible that the same people were there, living the same lives? She felt like Rip Van Winkle.

2

She stood at the rail for a long time after the little crowd of people on the dock were lost in a blurred black and white pattern. . . . The shore of the river sloped pastorally, and church spires rose languidly in the hazy heat. . . . In the city business blocks bulked solid and square, taller than the trees in Battery Park. . . . There was no breeze, and the water was glassy, except where a lumbering ferry-boat turned a crisp metallic wake. . . . The Bakers went below, but Ann lingered.

. . . The island of New York was slipping away. The United States was slipping away, and she was singularly indifferent. . . . With unseeing eyes she watched the rural shore fly past. . . . She wondered if she should like it abroad. . . . She wondered, miserably, if she had any possibility of enjoyment left in her. . . . She felt quite drained of emotion. . . . A white winged gull swooped down over the boat, and then planed, on wide wings, stationary in the hot bluish sky. It was pretty, she thought dully.

She must have been more tired than she realized, for she slept practically all the time for three days. Now and then the stewardess awoke her with something to eat, but it was only a temporary interruption, and she was lost again in no time. On the fourth morning, however, she awoke fully, delightfully, on hearing the bugle. She sang to herself, as she dressed, and laughed when the motion of the boat made her lurch against the berth, or up against the side of the cabin. . . . It must be rough, she decided, and waited experimentally to see if she had any unpleasant symptoms. . . . Nothing. . . . She was even conscious of being hungry.

The stewardess was delighted to see her up; she gave Ann the impression that it was something of a feat to be out of her berth and dressed. Mrs. Baker, she said, was ill.

"Not the old gentleman, though," she added. "He's asking for you, miss."

Miss! It gave the matron of thirteen years a delightfully girlish feeling.

She ate a colossal breakfast of strange foods. . . . Bacon which was all lean meat, and kippered fish, because the name made her think of Charles Dickens' novels. There was no cream: of course not, at sea. She drank her bitter tea with a sense of adventure.

Mr. Baker was delighted to see her. He had a chair reserved for her, and the deck steward tucked her into

it expertly. . . . A fresh wind was sweeping the sea: it was not cold, but after the heat ashore it was extraordinarily refreshing. . . . Over Ann's head the swelling canvas shone white in the sunlight. . . . The ocean glittered gaily beyond the heaving rail. . . . An Englishman and his wife, both very plaid indeed, and he with a monocle and side whiskers exactly like the pictures in *Punch,* shot past Ann's chair, and she craned her neck to see where they could be going in such a great hurry. . . . In a few moments they shot past again, absorbed and determined. . . . A grim-faced old woman sat near her.

"A baroness!" Mr. Baker whispered deferentially.

She felt extraordinarily light-hearted. She felt utterly different: it was as though she had been spiritually reborn.

"You are improved already," the banker told her.

At luncheon Ann decided that she did not like ale, and that she did like Stilton cheese. She ate a large wedge of it with her comfortless sea-biscuit. On deck again the steward came and tucked her up in her steamer rug. All about her people were dozing, and Mr. Baker recommended a nap. Obediently she closed her eyes, but in an instant they opened wide again. A nap,—with the wind of adventure on the sea?

Presently she stole from her rug, feeling rather shy. . . . She made the circuit of the deck once, experimentally, but people stared at her, and the motion made her feet uncertain, so she decided to go down and see how Mrs. Baker was getting on.

It was stuffy below, and Ann wrinkled her fine little nose disgustedly. Mrs. Baker lay, a crumpled and hopeless old woman, in the lower berth. She lurched exaggeratedly with each motion of the boat. "Is there a fearful storm?" she asked feebly, when Ann appeared.

Her young friend endeavored to reassure her. "You'd be all right if you would only get on deck."

"I shan't venture from this room until we land," Mrs. Baker told her firmly. "And if I don't absolutely hate Europe I shall stay there—forever."

"You'll get your sea legs on before long," Ann responded hopefully.

"My sea —?" She couldn't, in her weakened condition, frame the objectionable word.

Ann laughed: she couldn't help it. "That's short for getting over seasickness," she said.

"It isn't my . . . limbs . . . which are seasick," Mrs. Baker told her, with what dignity she could summon in the circumstances.

Ann's vitality was not yet sufficiently restored for her to make the effort required to talk to strangers, and she made few acquaintances on board. When Mrs. Baker staggered on deck her young companion reclined contentedly in the chair beside her for the greater part of the time. Her mind was as empty as the sea; the drowsy days passed like magic.

As time went on, nevertheless, she was conscious of a thrilling feeling of revivification under the tranquillity which had blessed her on shipboard. As they approached the coast of England, they came into peopled waters: the horizon was crowded with sails; sometimes they came close enough to a strange craft to be able to see, through the glass, that, alien and romantic, she belonged in some Oriental port. This was exciting. This was adventure.

Sometimes, too, the beauty of the sea and sky struck Ann's esthetic sensibilities with such force that she was almost dizzy. . . . Sometimes the strangers about her looked extraordinarily attractive; they seemed to have more flavor than people she had known. . . . Life was sharpened; its drab was shot with color. . . . She wondered at herself for not missing her children more acutely,—but what did it matter? What did anything matter if she succeeded

in keeping her hold on enthusiasm and on a thing which came to her in flashes, now and then, like the sunlight on a white gull's wing, and which seemed to her to be joy?

3

The thing which first struck Ann about England was its unlikeness to anything she had known. She stood in the corridor all the way up to London, exclaiming at the quaintness of the cottages set in deep lush green, and the beauty of an occasional Georgian manor house, glowing in its setting of woods and fields.

Mrs. Baker revived in London, but seeing sights tired the old lady, and even her husband was prone to sit about on benches while his younger companion toiled up the stairs in the Tower of London, or walked interminable miles through picture galleries.

Although the season was at its height, the travelers met no one. Mr. Baker came abroad armed with a full panoply of letters to representatives of the United States Government, and it was not until Ann found herself in London that she discovered he had no thought of presenting them. He was the sort of American who took a perverse pride in neglecting opportunities of this sort; the thought of taking advantage of them affronted his self-respect. He carried the letters about with him, fastened together by a rubber band, and felt about them much as he did about having money in the bank. If there came a rainy day,—there was the minister, but if the skies remained fair, he could do very well without him.

Ann regretted this. She thought that the people she saw about her looked as if they might prove, on acquaintance, to be charming. They did not look to her very different from Americans, and she saw no reason why they might not like her, also. She was

captivated by London, as she drove about it in the ubiquitous hansom cab, and she looked somewhat wistfully at a world which she might not enter.

Mrs. Baker's keenest interest was the Queen. She was emerging from her long seclusion following the death of the Prince Consort, and under the stimulating influence of Disraeli, she again drove about her capital in imposing state carriages, sometimes accompanied by the beautiful young Princess of Wales, sometimes by more rugged members of her own family. It was really not unreasonable of the banker's wife to believe that she might, at any time, catch a glimpse of her, and when she was successful she was set up for the day. One glimpse of the stout, middle-class little figure, and the plain impassive face under a black crêpe mourning bonnet, made her feel that even the voyage had been worth while.

"I know just how I shall dress if I outlive Mr. Baker," she confided to Ann seriously.

After a fortnight in town, the travelers embarked upon a coaching trip. . . . Ann had been loath to leave London, but once on the road, seated high on the top of a swaying coach, she wished that they might spend all the rest of their time in coaching. The sound of the horn mellow on the soft English air delighted her. The lovely running country on either hand enchanted her, and every night, when the inn where they were to stop was reached, she fell in love with it anew. . . . She liked to stand at a window and look down into the stableyard, all bustle and hearty good will. . . . She liked to see the tired horses, their heads drooping, trudge steadily in to feed, and the fresh four come stamping out, manes tossing in the breeze. . . . Sometimes her room gave on a garden filled with wholesome, strong colored flowers. . . . Sometimes trees opened before it, and she had glimpses of rolling misty country broken by patches of wood; sometimes

flocks of smoky sheep nibbled their way industriously across a field, and once, when the inn bordered on a great private park, she awoke early in the morning, and, stealing to her window, had a startling, sylvan glimpse of a herd of fallow deer, shy and tranquil, under high oaks.

Her face grew soft and rosy in the damp English wind and the tempered English sun, and the look of strain which had influenced the doctor in ordering her abroad gradually left it. She looked extraordinarily young, too, and she came down to breakfast every morning with some quality of the dawn about her, which was unreasonable in a woman of thirty-three, the mother of three children. She could not but be aware of it herself, and dimly she felt it to be a tragedy when beauty was its own reward for being, but she was unreasonably pleased about it, nevertheless.

4

They had a miserable crossing from Dover to Calais, and when they landed, they went at once to an amusing, pink plaster hotel, which overlooked the harbor. Before it an array of chairs and little tables stood invitingly about, and an arbor protected them from the heat of the sun. They were painted a faded blue.

"How sweet!" Ann murmured.

"How public!" Mrs. Baker sighed weakly.

France was very different from England; Ann discovered that almost at once. There were a great number of idle men standing about, who looked at ladies with thoroughness and appreciation. Their bold eyes abashed Ann, and she allowed the banker to protect her with a sensation of the most docile thankfulness. Even inside the hotel they stared,—the men behind the desk, and the porter who staggered up-stairs with luggage.

"Merci!" Ann told him, experimenting timidly with her girlhood French.

Smiling expansively, he replied with an outburst of unintelligible words. Was this strange language French? Ann wondered. Certainly it was unlike her own.

The deep quiet of the English hotel was gone: the building rang with voices, and there was always a subdued sound of movement. Outside, the water-front street was clamorous. Men driving spry little horses in single open carriages cracked long whips, and shouted. Ann wondered what it was they shouted, and leaning out of her window, she heard a bearded son of France calling affectionately, *"O-hé, Monsieur—o-hé!"* It was all endearingly childlike.

The travelers were dubious about dinner, but it proved to be excellent. One ate what was brought, and Mr. Baker persuaded Ann to taste the red wine of Bordeaux, which she found delicious. She wished that they might have eaten out-of-doors, under the enchanting trellis, but there hadn't been a chance of it. . . . Mr. Baker even refused to drink coffee there, although it was evident that the proprietor was amazed at such seclusion.

Peter would have been like that, Ann thought; there was no use in her thinking the Bakers were queer; undoubtedly it was she who was the strange one. She did not even suggest that they walk about and explore the little town. She knew better.

She scarcely slept at all. All night long the strangest sounds smote her windows: there was an extraordinary amount of carting, for one thing, and the men sitting about at the tables below her seemed to grow more and more talkative as the night wore on. They were not noisy in the rowdy sense; they were simply conversational, and curiously ejaculatory. Toward morning she did succeed in forgetting herself

and her surroundings for a brief space, and she awoke to new sounds. It was almost terrifying to lie alone, listening. . . . She slipped out of her high bed, and stealing to the window, she pushed back the heavy damask curtain. . . . The sun came in, sweetly: it was the earliest day. Below her in the street two wheeled carts were proceeding in a jolting procession. They were piled high with vegetables, and each one was drawn by two sturdy horses, one ahead of the other. They appeared to be guided only by the shouts of men who ran excitedly alongside. She looked down into the loads: there were cauliflower like wedding bouquets, and bunches of beets and carrots which had been scrubbed until they glowed in the sun like jewels. She opened the window, and a clear wind off the sea struck through the cambric of her night-dress, and made her shiver. She wasn't sure but that she should like France even better than England.

In Paris they went to the Grand Hotel, and in this stronghold of Anglo-Saxonism Mrs. Baker breathed freely again. She almost was not sorry they had come, and she talked to Ann about shopping with considerable ardor. . . . Food; too, absorbed her. At home her recipes were famous, and she was continually asking Ann to inquire from waiters how certain dishes were made. She longed to astonish, with viands rich and rare as these, the friends who came annually to dinner with her in Chicago.

At a dressmaker's recommended to them at the hotel, Mrs. Baker bought herself a new and unprecedented black silk, and Ann ordered a bottle-green taffeta made in the most extreme of bustles, in which she looked about half her age. She bought hats, too. Peter had been generous in the matter of a letter of credit. Why should she not buy hats? She did: her room was congested with them; every time she went out she bought one, and she never could decide which was

the more becoming. She meant to buy other dresses, also, but she hesitated because she was by no means certain that the one establishment she knew was the very most advanced of its kind. She proposed to make no mistakes in ordering dresses. The brief time she had spent in one fitting room had taught her that the new beauty she had shamefacedly recognized was something to set to the most perfect advantage.

The travelers accomplished very little in the way of sight-seeing in Paris, as there seemed to be no time for it. They drove about the beautiful city and its environs, and, as Mrs. Baker's interest in royalty persisted, they looked with romantic curiosity at the palaces so lately occupied by the beautiful Empress Eugénie. Ann thought the gardens of the Tuileries, where broken statues and masonry still lay in the neglected waste, was the most melancholy place she had ever seen.

"As a good American, I suppose I should be glad to see all these kings' possessions turned over to the people,—but somehow I can't help thinking it is rather a pity," she said, sighing.

Mr. Baker had none of the instinctive affection for France which he had for England. There was something about London, built about and upon the bank of England, which made a banker feel that he had found the promised land. It was safe. It was solid. It was eminently sane. France was different, and notwithstanding the respect he felt for the speed with which she had paid off her indemnity to Prussia, he was convinced that France was light.

Nothing which he saw in Paris made him change this opinion. He took his wife and Ann to the theater once, to see a musical farce which the *concierge* had recommended to him one day when he was unaccompanied by the ladies. They were barely in their seats when it was evident that he had made a mistake. One

didn't need to speak the language to see that, and it was not more than five minutes before Mrs. Baker rose, with all the majesty of her favorite queen, and led their retreat. Ann, who was beginning to understand French, was rather pink as she followed her docilely up an aisle lined with amazed faces.

The opera was more successful,—more suitable, Mrs. Baker said, and they went often, as they had little else to do with their evenings. Mr. Baker liked to go about with Ann. People looked at her with so much interest; he thought it amazing that she should remain entirely unconscious of it.

That was all he knew about it. Ann wasn't unconscious. In every fiber of her being she was suddenly aware of being an object of interest, respectful or not, to the opposite sex. . . . It troubled her; it made her wish more than ever, and quite simply, that she had made a better success of marriage.

She was conscious all the time that Paris was a man and woman's town. In the daytime, driving about in open cabs, in the hat shops, where young gentlemen with sharp black mustaches paid intense attention to the choice of a companion's bonnet, in the restaurants, sitting close to one another on the seat which ran along the wall, in the parks, openly making love on benches, men and women were always together. At night, she had seen them emerging stealthily from under the heavy shade of the *Champs Élysées;* she could see them sitting together in carriages, with wide areas of empty seat on either side of them; even at the opera, as they listened to the sensuous music, they sent each other secret glances. It was profoundly disturbing. It gave life quite another meaning, and she sometimes wondered if it were, after all, the right one. Certainly it seemed very different from the American idea.

At any rate, suddenly she wanted to be beautiful;

she wanted to be charming, even with no one to care. In Paris, she felt that she owed it to some inner sixth sense to make the most delightful appearance that she could.

They had meant to see Switzerland before sailing for home, but Mrs. Baker heard that there were bandits in the mountains, and after that nothing could persuade her to go. Instead, she clung to Paris, and talked of Chicago. She was becoming weary of her foreign experience. "I am sick to death of it here," she announced to Ann. "This gallivanting around is all very well for a while, but enough is enough. I want to go home, where I have friends, and where I know where I am."

"Home?" Ann echoed, startled. "Our three months are not nearly up."

"I don't care. I've had enough, and Mr. Baker has, too. He thinks we may as well sail at any time now, and they say the sea is calmer in August than it will be later."

Ann was appalled. She was not ready to go home. She had left hoping to come back eagerly,—gloriously,—and here she was, shivering with distaste at the idea of going back at all! "I don't want to sail yet," she faltered miserably. "Doctor Whipple said I should stay at least three months."

"You look very well to me," Mrs. Baker returned dryly, and after that there was continual talk of returning to the United States.

Mr. Baker visited the shipping offices every day, and brought plans of boats back with him to the hotel. Finally he announced that he had business letters which made it necessary for him to return to Chicago, and that ended what uncertainty remained to give Ann hope. It was at once determined that the travelers should leave on the following Saturday.

"If you are not ready to come with us, why don't you

join our friends the Richard Murrays?" Mrs. Baker asked Ann, feeling rather guilty as she looked at her white face.

"I suppose I might wait for them," Ann said slowly. She liked the Murrays. "But I should be all alone here." To herself she said, "This means I can stay longer!" It would be more than three months.

"It won't be long before the Murrays are due in Paris," the banker told her reassuringly. "They planned to come about this time."

"I will telegraph them," Ann said, and it was virtually decided that she should stay.

They crowded all the sight-seeing they could into the last few days, and they shopped feverishly. Mrs. Baker put toys for Ann's children in her trunk, and Mr. Baker took her over to his banker's, and introduced her personally.

"If you should need anything, come to me," the president said, smiling with friendly lips and shrewd eyes.

It was only on the evening before the Bakers sailed that Ann had a wire from Mrs. Murray, telling her that they had changed their plans, and were not coming back to Paris. "We sail from Antwerp. Will meet you on boat," the message ended.

She was aghast, but not even in the first distracted moment did she entertain any thought of going home with her friends. It was easier to face being left alone in Paris for six weeks than it was to leave, so she said nothing about her telegram, and she went off to a last dinner at the Café de la Paix with all the specious gaiety she could summon.

In the morning, with a sinking heart, she drove to the station with her friends. She gave Mrs. Baker an extravagant parting present, and kissed her with real affection. . . . She felt excessively attached to both the old people as she helped them settle in their com-

partment. . . . She stood outside, talking feverishly to the sound of violently blown tin horns. . . . The engine started, and she began to wave her hand; there was a lump in her throat, and if she could have run down the track and caught the train, she might have abandoned everything, and left Paris, after all. She felt very lonely and forlorn when she walked out of the station.

5

Ann did not know a soul to speak to, in town or out of it, except the banker Mr. Baker had provided her with in case of emergency. She felt conspicuously alone: the men who stared at her on the street frightened her, and in the hotel, where she spent the greater part of her time, she knew people thought it "queer" for so young a woman to be so solitary. She went out every day, and began to feel that she knew something about Paris,—or at any rate that part of it where tourists congregated. She walked a great deal, because Mrs. Baker used to tell grisly stories of abduction by cab drivers, and she avoided low foreign neighborhoods, as she classified the quarters occupied exclusively by the natives. She was determined to read up on French history when she went home: away off there in France she did not know what books to ask for, or she would have begun at once. She had a lively and growing curiosity about Paris, and all the time she felt that if she only had the key with which to unlock the city, she might be getting a vast deal more out of it. In her loneliness she felt the need of a guide, philosopher and friend.

She had the American woman's great diversion in Paris, however: she could, and did, shop. One needed no companionship for that, and she discovered, at last, the establishment of a world famous dressmaker. There she spent Peter's money with a lavish hand, and was

happier when she was standing before a shining triple mirror having dazzling fabrics draped upon her slim figure, than at any other time. She bought dress after dress, and her *vendeuse* fancied that she was leading a complicated social life in Paris. She had no way of knowing that the costumes which had gone to the hotel were still unworn.

One afternoon when she was about to take a reluctant departure from this safe and admiring haven, Ann was startled to hear a voice from an adjoining fitting room which sounded familiar. . . . The woman, whoever it was, was talking in French which was rapid and fluent, but which Ann found it easy to understand, and therefore decided could not be good. She was interrupted and accompanied by the respectful and eager voices of saleswomen. *"Oui, Madame," "Parfaitement, Madame." "Merci, Madame."* And then louder and more dominating, *"Madame est ravissante!"*

Ann decided to linger, and emerge at the same moment as her unknown neighbor. She was increasingly certain she had heard that voice before, but she could not have said where. She listened, and when the chorus of saleswomen turned their admiration to Madame's cloak, she put on her own, and opened the door of her fitting-room. The one on her right was just swinging: she had timed it well. There was a little pause, while Ann stood buttoning her glove, and then a fitter or two and a saleswoman came out into the corridor and flattened themselves against the wall.

"Au revoir," the familiar voice was saying. *"N'oubliez pas que je veux la robe blanche pour le bal de l'Ambassadeur d'Angleterre jeudi absolument."*

Ann turned away, for she knew no one who wanted white dresses to wear to ambassadors' balls. There was a little flurry behind her, and the swish of silken skirts. The chorus had begun again. *"Soyez tranquille, Madame." "Parfaitement, Madame." "Prenez*

garde, Madame." "Merci, Madame." "Bon jour, Madame."

Ann turned to look at her, and at first she saw nothing but clothes. There was a wine red dress, artfully and beautifully fashioned, and a wide black hat, from the brim of which a lace veil drooped. There was a black silk coat, too, immensely daring, over the red gown. The face. . . . Suddenly Ann saw that the gorgeous creature was staring at her, and she returned the scrutiny. "Susanna!" she gasped. She had never been more amazed. She had no time at all to think about how she should greet the prodigal.

"Ann!" Susanna dropped her gloves, her bag and her tiny sunshade. She flung her arms about her old friend, rejoicing. "I was never in all my life so glad to see any one!"

Ann kissed her, also. There was no use denying that she was glad to see Susanna, and immensely curious about her, too. It needed no second glance to see that she was prosperous, at any rate.

"Where are you staying?"

"At the Grand Hotel."

"Fearfully dull, isn't it? Is Peter with you?"

"No."

"Titus will be sorry about that. We'll have tea, won't we? Have you anything to do?"

"No." Ann's spirits were soaring.

"We'll go to Laurent's, where we are sure to see amusing people. . . . And you'll dine with us, won't you, darling? I'm having a party." As they swept through the lower shop Ann found herself assenting, in a sort of panic. What had become of her earlier feeling of censure of Susanna? What would Daniel Lunt say if he knew she was going to her house?

Out in the Rue de la Paix a brougham was waiting. It was a perfect brougham; it was far too perfect to be French; it was perfect enough to be English. One man

in white breeches sat erect on the box; another, very much like him, except that he was somewhat smaller, stood in frozen correctness at the curb. He carried a rich brown fur robe over one crooked arm, and he looked straight in front of him. At their approach Ann was immensely startled to have him suddenly spring into another attitude, like a jointed wooden toy which one pulls on a string. This time he stood at attention, his fingers at the brim of his shining hat.

"Is it yours?" Ann gasped. She was dumfounded. She had taken it for granted that Susanna must be living in remote inconspicuousness, and here she was, mistress of a carriage and pair which made the Rue de la Paix, of all streets, gasp.

"Yes, it's mine," Susanna replied languidly. "The horses are nice, aren't they?"

Ann had a swift glimpse of them, as the automaton opened the door. "They are beauties!"

"Laurent's," Susanna murmured languidly to the footman; the door shut softly, and they were off. Ann could see the man leap for his seat, after the impatient horses had sprung forward. "Titus says that anyway he'll have the finest stable in Paris, and you know what he is like when he wants a thing, Ann. He just has to have it."

Yes, Ann knew. She remembered the last time she had seen Susanna, lying crumpled and tear-stained on a hotel bed.

As though she read her thoughts, the other woman turned to her: "You know I shouldn't have any of this, except for you. You're the best friend a woman ever had. . . . I haven't forgotten—anything."

Ann, embarrassed, murmured that she had done nothing, but she recalled how she had urged Titus Jefferson to pick up the pieces of Susanna's broken life. And here she was, much better than new. It was all very disconcerting.

She had never heard of Laurent's before, but it was evident that she should have done so, for the place was crowded with smart-looking people sitting at small tables, and drinking tea. She was glad that she had put on a new gown for her fitting.

Susanna ordered with brisk efficiency, then turned to her friend. "Do you think I've changed much?"

Ann looked squarely back at her. "Yes," she said, "you're prettier. . . . You're more—exciting."

Susanna laughed, well satisfied with this verdict. "You don't look exciting: you look like a baby! How do you do it? No rouge, I suppose?"

Ann shook her head, half ashamed, as a sleek, youngish man came up to their table, and bent to kiss Susanna's hand.

She introduced him offhandedly. "The Baron de Mauprés," she said.

He kissed Ann's hand, too, and stood talking to the two ladies. The American found that her weeks in Paris had not been wasted: she could understand what was said, if the talk was not too fast, and she ventured a French phrase or two of her own. . . . Another man came up, and women bowed charmingly to Susanna, over their tables. . . . The *maître d'hôtel* hovered in their vicinity, and made a nuisance of himself asking if all was well.

"C'est bien, Madame? Merci, Madame. À vôtre service, Madame."

Astonishing as it might be, it was evident that Susanna was a person of importance. Was there then, Ann wondered, nothing in all the talk about punishment for wrongdoing, on which she had been brought up? She had never seen any one less chastised than her wayward friend.

On their way to the hotel Susanna asked, "Have you evening dresses with you? If not, I can easily lend you one."

Gladly Ann remembered a ridiculously elegant pink satin gown she had bought for the sheer pleasure of yielding to so exquisite a temptation. "I'm all right, thank you." She stole a glance at Susanna's elaborate coiffure. "If you can tell me of a good hair-dresser I'd be glad."

"I'll send you mine," her friend promised.

Dinner was not until eight o'clock, and Ann thought that it was no wonder people had tea. She sang as she took the pink satin from its nest of paper. It was the most exquisite shade of palest rose, made with a very low cut neck, and no sleeves at all. Ann knew that she looked her best in it, for the color was not deep enough to war with her hair, and it made her white skin seem luminous, almost like the seed pearls in the necklace she fastened about her throat, only warmer and softer looking.

She wore her hair in a style much too plain for the prevailing fashion, and she was interested to see what a professional would do with it, although when he came up she could not help being momentarily embarrassed at having a man in her bedroom. His first suggestion startled her.

"You must have ze bang, Madame."

A bang? Well, why not? *"Bien,"* she said.

When she looked at herself in the mirror she could scarcely believe that it was her own reflection which confronted her. She had never before worn her hair piled on her head in that fashion, with one ringlet drooping over her white shoulder. . . . She had not known that she could look piquante, but undoubtedly the face which confronted her under the soft red fringe had that delightful quality.

"C'est bien, Madame?" The Frenchman rubbed his hands anxiously.

"Oui, c'est très bien. Je suis enchantée!"

The little hairdresser was delighted. He assured

her she would be ravishing that evening, and, for the moment, she almost believed him.

She lost her confidence while driving to Susanna's, for again she felt miserably alone. She wanted some one with her in the dim intimacy of the cab. She wanted some one to take her hand and tell her that she was ravishing. . . . Peter? . . . No. If Peter were driving out with her to a Paris dinner party he wouldn't be saying that. . . . She pulled herself up. She couldn't have everything.

Titus Jefferson's house was so large that it looked like some great public hotel. It stood back from the street in a deep garden, and there was a wall around the enclosure. Lamps were lighted on either side of a pair of high iron gates through which she drove, and a second pair shone at the doorway. . . . A footman sprang to open the humble door of her cab. . . . She stepped out on to a red carpet which stretched into the house. . . . More footmen came forward as she entered. She was waved into a little basement dressing-room, where a maid seized her cloak, and bore it off to a row of hooks. She felt frozen. This was not the way in which she would have received Susanna, in Chicago.

After a survey of her strange self in a long, well lighted mirror, she went deliberately up the ample, curving stairway. At the top she paused, shyly. She had never seen so large a house. It was vast. Away off in the distance people were standing, stiffly. She wished that she hadn't come. She wished that she had never seen Susanna. She drifted forward, holding her head consciously erect. At the door of the final *salon* she was stopped by a magnificent creature in puce livery.

"*Votre nom, Madame?*"

"Mrs. Smith," she murmured, abashed.

"Madame Smit'," the man roared out, and she

went forward, a little angry now, at all this formality. She could see a long, loose jointed man separate himself from the group at the end of the room and come forward. It was Titus, amazingly unchanged.

"Well, b' God—Ann!" he said. He was plainly delighted to see her. "Pretty as a picture, too, by golly! I suppose you haven't got a kiss for a fellow, have you?"

She shook her head, embarrassed at the general attention they attracted, and Titus roared out a laugh. "Susanna won't mind," he said. "I told her I should just kiss you when I saw you." He did so, at that, awkwardly, and very nicely. She didn't mind having him do it at all. Every one laughed, and Titus took her over to Susanna, magnificent in real lace and diamonds. The introductions were over in a moment, and Ann felt delightfully at home.

"You Americans!" one of the ladies said to her in careful English. "How you do what you please—*non?*"

The room filled up: there must be at least thirty people there, Ann thought. Presently Susanna came over to her, a young man in tow. "I'm sorry you can't sit next Titus," she said. "The Italian Ambassador's wife is here, and Madame Sorel, whose husband is in the government, so of course you can't. . . . Bore, isn't it? . . . And I came in too late to reseat the table. I just added Casson, and you'll have to go in with him, although he isn't very important."

Casson laughed, so that Ann saw he didn't mind. "I am in your debt, Mrs. Smith. Otherwise, I should not have come until after the dinner."

He was an American, Ann was almost certain, as she put the tips of her fingers in his offered arm. He was very handsome, too.

CHAPTER XXVI

A DINNER PARTY

The long table, lighted by candles set in high gilt candelabra, was very brilliant. There were candles in sconces on the walls, too, and in the crystal and bronze chandelier which hung from an incredibly high ceiling. The great room, formal and symmetrical, was lovely in the mellow light.

Ann glanced about her as she arranged her draperies, preparatory to seating herself. She was a little afraid of the exotic-looking people around her. The women in particular seemed alien; they were most of them dark, with brownish skins which Ann thought hideous, and their challenging eyes seemed to have looked at more things than she had ever dreamed of. The citizeness of the United States envied them the competence of their complete sophistication. They paid no attention at all to her; she could see that they were entirely centered on the men. . . . Ann wished that they would reciprocate; it embarrassed her always to meet a concentrated Latin gaze whenever she glanced about her. She had no idea how provocative she was in her clean blonde prettiness, compared to the smouldering French women.

She had an Englishman on her right, but she did not remember his name. It made no difference, however, as he was completely absorbed in a daring-looking creature with a big ugly mouth and lambent eyes, who sat on his other side.

Casson said, "Pretty table, isn't it?"

Thus recalled to her duties toward him, she came back with a little jump. "Lovely. You must tell me who people are."

"I don't know very many of them. . . . I'm not an important person at all, you see, and this is a very grand dinner party."

Ann touched her lips to the sherry which had been poured into the first and smaller of the long row of wineglasses beside her place, and regarded her dinner partner with thoughtful eyes. He was very young, and singularly handsome. He had a romantic look, she thought; he was like Shelley, or Lord Byron, and she wondered if he wrote poetry. He wore a collar like a poet's,—wide open on his strong throat, and his hair was brushed back in a roll from his clear unguarded face. He didn't look unimportant. "Tell me those you do know," she said.

"Well, the fat old one next Mrs. Jefferson is the Italian ambassador. . . . It is a pity that we shall undoubtedly be too grand to have spaghetti, isn't it?"

"Why?"

"It satisfies my soul to see an Italian eat spaghetti —like any perfect art. That's his wife next Mr. Jefferson. They say she has quite a past. Doesn't look it, does she?" She didn't, and Ann wondered at men. "That is General Degonette beside her, and the woman he is talking to used to be lady-in-waiting to the empress; she is the Princess de Lampret. Her husband made his peace with the government, but they say she is still a royalist at heart."

"She looks very unhappy."

"I suppose all this reminds her of better days. . . . Mr. Jefferson is one of the few men in Paris who can afford this sort of thing now."

Down the vista of the table Ann could see her host. He looked just as he had in Chicago; he was sprawled

over his table in exactly the way he used to sprawl over hers, talking. He was as ungainly as ever.

"He is a great card," Casson was saying. "I heard him say the other day that instead of playing the races he played the French Government. . . . They say he lends money to men in the right places, but I don't know. . . . That is the wife of an official on his left: he is an important man,—next Mrs. Jefferson. He has my fate in his hands."

"I thought you were an American!"

"I am, but you see, he is the *Ministre des Beaux Arts;* his word goes with the opera people." Seeing from Ann's mystified look that she did not understand what he was talking about, he added explicitly, "I sing, you know."

"I thought that you might write poetry." She was reluctant to abandon her first romantic idea, but, after all, a singer was not ordinary.

"Lord, no! I'm just a tenor. Mrs. Jefferson is going to give me an opportunity to sing for the minister. That is why I am not eating anything. It takes a lot of character to let food in this house alone. I wasn't coming to the dinner until you turned up, and Mrs. Jefferson needed another man." He met Ann's eyes, smiled, and added, "I am glad I did." His young face was amazingly candid.

"I am glad you did, too. . . . I have never met a tenor before."

"Only baritones?" he asked.

"No,—sopranos!" she retorted, and they laughed, well started on a mutual liking.

"Do you sing in opera?"

"Not yet. Of course I hope to."

"It seems a queer life for an American."

"I dare say you think I should be a business man!"

"As a matter of fact, I was thinking that I was glad you weren't."

"I suppose all the men you know are?"

"Oh, yes."

"Successful, too, I dare say. . . . They are the worst kind."

"If one business man I know wasn't successful, I shouldn't be here now," Ann reminded him, a little sharply.

"Well, as a matter of fact, neither should I! Stoves are providing for me."

"What do you mean?"

"The musical wife of a stove king heard me sing in a church choir, and became interested in me,—in my voice, I should say. Her husband loaned me the money to get an education."

Ann flushed a little. She could not help thinking this dependence something to be ashamed of. "Oh," she said vaguely.

Casson took in her confusion, and his own color deepened. "Of course I expect to pay him back some day."

"Of course," Ann echoed hastily. After all, she could think of no more delightful way of spending money than in the education of tenors.

"I am making something already. I have a few pupils, and I sing in the American church on Sundays."

"I shall come to hear you."

"Please don't,—hymns are so ugly."

A footman leaned over Ann to fill her champagne glass. She shook her head. "*Merci,*" she said, too late.

"Why stop him?" a voice on her right drawled. "Possibly if you drink some of that you may have the fortitude to talk to me. . . . Besides, it is *Veuve Cliquot,* 1862." She swung around at that, startled, "Forgot all about me, eh?"

"No, but when I looked your way last, you were very much occupied." She wondered if he might possibly think her impudent, saying that.

He was chuckling, however. "I was being attacked by a hurricane, and all the time I wanted to enjoy your gentle zephyrs." Ann bridled, and he laughed. He was a plain man, but when he laughed he became attractive. "You are a modern woman, aren't you? You don't enjoy being called gentle."

"I like gentle men better than gentle women."

"Yes, you Americans do. I've noticed that. You interest me extraordinarily. Now tell me about yourself. What is your situation in life? Have you, for a starter, a husband?"

"Yes. He is in Chicago, Illinois."

"There you have it! A gentle husband—in Chicago, Illinois."

"Peter isn't so gentle," she expostulated.

"What does he do to buy you frocks like this one?"

"He makes steel rails, mostly."

He was startled. "I didn't know steel ran to that, in the States."

"Didn't you?"

"Let us get back to you. You have no children, I imagine?"

"I don't see why you should imagine a thing like that. I have three."

"No?" He was genuinely amazed. "Congratulations—what? I should say, to look at you, that the elder must be about two, and the others twins of one."

"He is twelve years old."

"You American women are extraordinary! I happen to have three children myself. That is my wife sitting next the ambassador. She hasn't come through looking like an untouched flower."

She hadn't, Ann decided. She looked rather like a horse, but she looked like a fine woman, also. "I was all tired out, myself," she explained, a little uncomfortably. "That is why I had to come away."

"My word! Your trip must have been a superb

success, don't you know! You look—thoroughly rested. . . . Going to stay, now that you are over here?"

"I am sailing for home in four weeks." She was rather nettled at his questions.

"Don't be cross. It isn't in character in that frock. You must never wear it if you feel a crossness coming on. . . . That's better. Now tell me, what does your . . . what does Peter do while you are away?"

"How can I tell if I am not there?"

"I wish you would be serious. It is a point of view I should enormously like to understand. . . . You are not the first American woman I've seen over here on her own. I must have met a half dozen of 'em this year. . . . They are pretty, and stylish, and full of life,—but why don't their husbands come too?"

"They don't want to," Ann replied bitterly. "They would rather stick at some old factory, or office, or mill. . . . It is easy enough for them to let their wives go; what they couldn't stand would be to be parted from their business."

"Extraordinary! . . . Now I hunt:—big game, don't you know, and of course I can't find it in my own garden. I've been to Africa twice, and once out to India. My wife runs the show while I am gone: she is a better business man than I am, at any rate. . . . It would never occur to her to go gallivantin' off by herself, the way your women do."

"If Peter went gallivantin', I dare say I shouldn't. Perhaps I might find it more interesting to run a steel business myself than to travel. I should like to try it."

There was an edge to Ann's voice, and the Englishman said easily. "Better try this *Sorbet au Marasquin*, instead. It is very fair."

Ann tasted it; it was delicious, in the hot room.

She ate some of it, wondering at the magnificence of Susanna's dinner. The woman on her neighbor's other side seized the moment to recapture him. Ann heard her say, "You do not treat me well this evening, Lord Chesterton."

A lord? She had not known that they were as easy to talk to as that.

"Did you have a good time?" Susanna asked Ann, after dinner. "I saw you getting on famously with Chesterton."

"It was a beautiful dinner, Susanna."

"Oh,—fair. I could see Titus frown over his mutton. He always expects things to be perfect. . . . We'll have some music by and by. Perhaps Casson told you?"

"He said he was going to sing."

"I hope he will make a success. He has a lovely voice, but I dare say he is frightened. . . . Titus wanted me to have in some one who is well known, but for once I stuck fast." She took Ann with her as she circled the salon.

When the men joined the ladies, Titus came straight to Ann. "I'm going to talk to you," he said. "I don't give a damn who Susanna wants me to be polite to. Tell me about Chicago. How is Pete?"

"He is all right."

"Ever take another partner?"

"No."

Titus slapped his thigh, delighted. "That's good news! I got a big dividend from the Smith and Jefferson Company not long ago."

"So did we.—That is how I happened to come abroad."

"That's the ticket! Pete is a brick, Ann."

Men always felt like that about Peter. "Of course he is," his wife agreed hastily.

Presently Susanna stood up, with Casson beside her.

Every one then hastened to find seats; there was a great dragging about of chairs. Ann was glad to find that she was sitting where she had an unobstructed view of the piano. Finally there was a sudden silence, which Susanna broke. "I have asked Mr. Edward Casson to sing to us," she said, and there was some applause.

Casson looked white, but extraordinarily handsome. Ann heard a woman behind her sigh, "*Ah, comme il est beau!*" He walked over to the piano, where an accompanist was seated, and then faced the crowd defiantly. He said, "I shall sing *Céleste Aïda.*"

There was a little murmur. This was a courageous beginning, in direct competition with the gods of the Opera. It died away at the first notes of the piano.

2

It happened that Ann had never before heard a really beautiful voice at close hand, and the occasion thrilled her. It was one thing to listen to tenor solos across the safe barrier of the footlights, and quite another to be so near that the very softest breath of sound reached her heart, and melted it. . . . She was extraordinarily moved. She could not clap as the other people were doing; she sat very still indeed, looking with swimming eyes at the slender, bowing figure by the piano. She felt as though something terrible had happened to her; she had lost her moorings; she was at sea upon an unknown ocean. She wiped her eyes quite openly, as unself-conscious as a child.

Casson sang Gounod's *Salut Demeure Chaste* for an encore, and by the time the song was over, Ann had regained some control of herself. It was, she then saw, ridiculous to betray emotion in so extravagant a manner. She was quite tired out, after it. She thought that nothing had ever been so wonderful as Casson's tone when he took his high note in the grand Italian

manner: it made her heart stand still. This time, however, she was able to clap, and nod her head emphatically in response to a murmur of appreciation from some man beside her.

When it was over she felt exhausted; as if all the emotion had been drained out of her, and yet she was excited and responsive to the slightest appeal to her sensibilities. She wanted to hear what the *Ministre des Beaux Arts* was saying, so she edged over toward him, as he stood talking to Susanna.

"Yes—not bad," he said, and she wondered how a man so lacking in enthusiasm could be fit to judge artists. "In time, it may well be, but not too soon, you understand. Your *protégé* must work; he must live; he must suffer. It is of these that a voice must be made. . . . However, since it is you who ask, Madame, he shall, naturally, sing for the director."

While Susanna was murmuring her thanks, Ann fell back. "What a dreadful man!" she said to Lord Chesterton, who happened to be near her.

"Who—the minister? Lord, woman,—think what it must be to occupy his shoes! And you must remember that your young man is hampered by not being a beautiful soprano. Something convinces me that if he were, his path might be smoother. Ministers are but human, after all. . . . I say, do you always cry when you listen to music?"

Ann felt herself flushing. "Invariably," she said firmly. "You should see me when they play *God Save the Queen!*"

The Englishman threw back his head at that, and laughed. Then he became preternaturally grave. "If you ever cried like that at anything I did . . ." He broke off, groping for words, and began all over again. "Have you ever seen a wild animal shot?"

"No." She thought that he was an amazing man.

"It's like this. It is running along,—free and inde-

pendent as hell,—I beg your pardon,—and then all of a sudden, it keels over, done for. . . . I'd be like that, exactly. . . . So never do it, will you?"

"Never, I promise."

"By jove, my wife is making signs to me! I must toddle along, I am afraid: there's a boring affair at the Embassy. We shall see you again, I hope."

Just in time Ann remembered that he was a lord. "It would give me great pleasure," she said demurely.

"We are sending you home. Stay until the others have gone," Susanna murmured urgently, when Ann would have said good night, so she stayed. . . . As she turned away from her hostess, she saw Casson coming toward her. . . . Something quaked within her. . . . She wanted to keep her illusion. . . . She turned aside abruptly, and began talking feverishly to Titus Jefferson. She thought that he listened with a somewhat abstracted air.

When the other guests were gone, Susanna drew her to a bench by the fire. "I'm tired," she said. "That Italian is a great bore. I do dislike ambassadors!"

Jefferson suddenly gave his great bellow of laughter. "Listen to her!" he shouted. "Wouldn't you think she had been brought up on them? Susanna, you're a marvel—but you needn't talk to Ann and me like that."

Ann interposed nervously, "I thought that it was a lovely evening."

"The mutton was over-done. I hope you'll speak to the chef."

Susanna moved sharply, but her voice was patient enough. "To-morrow, Titus. . . . Or would you like me to get him out of bed to-night?"

Titus was quite serious;—judicial, even. "To-morrow will do." He had drunk enough to make him ponderous.

Ann hated the ugly little scene. "I must be going," she said, with some decision.

"I'll order the carriage as I go out," her host volunteered, with elaborate casualness.

"Titus!" his wife interposed. "You are not going out at this time of night?"

He turned to the guest, with the old clowning manner she so well remembered. "It is my wife's whim to pretend that Paris goes to sleep at midnight."

"It would do you good to," Susanna retorted sullenly. "What are you going to do now? Dance, I suppose—an old man like you!"

"If I can find a young enough partner, we shall at least make a good average. . . . You see, Ann, there are two departments to the opera: Susanna is interested in one:—I in the other. The difference is that I don't bring my tame cats home."

"Your ballet dancers, you mean!'

"Just so." He held out a huge hand to Ann. "See you soon, won't we?" He then bent over his wife, who sat, a magnificent and disconsolate figure, before the fireplace, and pulled her to her feet. "Cheer up. I'm not so bad after all. . . . Kiss me good night, honey, and we'll see about that bracelet in the morning."

Susanna kissed him, appeased, and in the doorway he paused. "Dinner was all right," he told her. "You mustn't mind if I was a bit put out."

The two women listened in silence to the sound of his feet on the stone floor in the hall, and then his wife spoke wearily. "He is like that," she said simply.

Ann was agonizingly embarrassed; she could not speak, so she slipped her arm about her friend's waist, and gave her a little hug. Close to, Susanna's face was worn.

"Paris is like that, too," she said drearily. "It is an awful place for Titus. He has to have excitement, you know, and the kind he gets here is bad for him." She shrugged impatiently. "Oh, well—I guess men are all alike, everywhere."

All at once her own troubles seemed insignificant to Ann. "Do you care for him still?" she asked indiscreetly. After all, that was the nub of the matter.

Titus' wife looked at her with world-weary eyes. "I adore him," she said. "It's unlucky, isn't it?"

There didn't seem to be anything to say to that, but in an instant Susanna, with a complete change of manner, was urging Ann to lunch with her on the following day. "There are people you must meet. . . . Don't you think we have a charming circle? It is wonderful the way Titus has managed to make himself necessary to big men over here. . . . Of course, I have helped him; he forgets that. People don't know I was divorced, fortunately: they are as strict about that over here as we are at home. It is about the only thing that does matter, though," she added reflectively.

"I must go."

"I suppose so: it is after twelve. . . . Do you mind taking Casson?"

"Hasn't he gone?"

"I think he is about somewhere." She called him, and in a moment he came in from the large *salon,* his hands filled with music.

"I can not thank you sufficiently," he said, shifting his portfolios so that he might take her hand. "You are too kind to me."

"You are to have your opportunity."

"The *Ministre* told me. It is all your doing, of course." He bent lingeringly over the hand he still held, and kissed it. Ann might never have been born, so completely was she excluded from the little scene.

"I am going to send you home now. If you will drop Mrs. Smith at the Grand Hotel, you can take the carriage on to your studio."

Casson turned with a slight start, and glanced at Ann. "That will be very nice," he said conventionally. She was a little hurt: they had got on so well at dinner

that she had expected him to be less impersonal. The spell of his singing had been quite broken by Susanna's revelations.

The two women kissed each other prettily, as women will when a man is looking on, first on one cheek and then on the other. "To-morrow," they said in chorus, and Ann added, "I have had a gorgeous evening."

3

Outside a warm late summer wind was searching through the trees: they rattled their dry leaves with a sound like great shudders. The brougham was at the door; this time a single gray horse was harnessed to it. He was pawing the gravel impatiently, and the outline of his powerful foreleg and fine, flexible hock was sharply outlined in the light of the doorway. Beyond that everything was dark.

Men servants gathered about Ann, and ushered her into the carriage, while Casson stood back, with an effect of helplessness. It was not until she had arranged her huge bustle, and made herself comfortable in her corner, that he jumped in after her. He had not said a word since leaving the *salon*, and Ann wondered uneasily if he could be irritated with her for not having congratulated him.

They started with a jerk which threw them violently against each other, however, and they both laughed. The tension, if there had been any, was gone.

"I haven't thanked you for your singing," Ann began.

"You don't have to. . . . I saw your face. Your eyes—your eyes had tears in them. That was why I sang so well. I never sang like that before!"

"I never cried like that, either!"

"I am glad to hear it. . . . What a night! I wish we might drive for hours. Don't you like to hear the wind?"

"I don't know. It is a terribly lonesome sound."

"I'm sure you can never have been lonesome."

"I have almost died of it in Paris! It is a dreadful town to be alone in."

"You won't be alone any more. I heard Mrs. Jefferson making plans for you. She is an indefatigable woman; you'll find your life full of engagements."

"I hope so, I am sure."

"I don't want to be selfish, but I hope you'll have time to let me see something of you. . . . When do you sail?"

"In four weeks."

"So soon? I wish you would let me take you in hand. I know this town: I should like to show it to you!"

"I should love to have you."

"Then it's a bargain? What are you doing to-morrow night?"

"Nothing."

"Then you'll take dinner with me. Are you afraid of being Bohemian?"

Ann had never heard the word except as applied to a middle European people. "What do you mean?"

"I mean—do we have to take table d'hôtes at dreadful places like the Grand Hotel, or can we go to amusing little restaurants where the students eat?"

She considered him gravely in the flashing light of a street-lamp. He looked very young, and she felt, at the moment, conveniently old. "I should think we might eat where we choose, and anyway, I don't know any one in Paris, except those people there to-night."

"All right. I'll call for you at seven o'clock."

With a sudden hollow drumming of the gray's feet, they turned upon a bridge over the river, and Ann cried out at the beauty of the long irregular streaks of light upon the ruffled surface of the water. "How wonderful Paris is," she sighed contentedly.

CHAPTER XXVII

SEEING PARIS

THERE was nothing extraordinary about the restaurant where, the following evening, Ann and Casson dined. It was simply a cozy little place with the customary seat against the wall, and a collection of small tables obviously made to serve two people each. She had had a somewhat guilty feeling as she left the Grand Hotel in company with a man about whom, after all, she knew so little, but the homely friendliness of *L'Escargot* reassured her.

The *maître d'hôtel* was also the proprietor. He came over to their table, and discussed at some length, and with great gravity, what they should order for their dinner. "I can't possibly eat snails!" Ann protested, but he refused to take her seriously.

"Madame does not know our sauce? Then she has never eaten the *escargot.*"

He hurried away to order, and returned to talk. He gave them an affectionate and detailed life-history of the snail, and would have brought one feeding upon a leaf, in order to win Ann's approval, had not Casson forbidden it. Then, somewhat crestfallen, he talked of his business.

"It is now not so bad. Every year it picks itself up —every year since the last Revolution. . . . Ah, Madame, we French have been through something. . . . The siege! I could then have given you not so much as one thin famished *escargot!*"

When the snails came, he hung over the table, in a crescendo of anxiety. Ann watched Casson with fascinated eyes as he speared a black leathery object with his fork. It looked simply disgusting to her, but decency drove her to try one. . . . It wasn't so bad, after all. . . . It was really delicious!

After that she ate what was brought without a qualm. A waiter put a bottle of red wine on their table, and she sipped it contentedly. . . . Presently the proprietor returned, bearing a platter. He flourished it before Ann, and beamed. "*Pieds de Cochon!*" he declaimed triumphantly. It was some time before she realized that the delectable food which she was eating was merely pig's feet. It was all very amusing indeed, and she laughed frequently, at nothing in particular.

Other couples came in. Young men in extreme clothes escorted fragile-looking girls who were many of them scarcely more than children. They leaned over the narrow table tops toward them in a way that was almost embarrassing to see, Ann thought, and the pairs who sat side by side along the wall frankly held each other's hands, between courses. She was amazed at such public demonstration of affection. She wondered that the proprietor allowed it.

There were a few older people there, also. Near them a middle-aged man with a round irritable face sat alone, eating a colossal dinner. He had ordered it with the most minute care, and even then he was not satisfied, for he summoned the proprietor, and spoke with passionate disapproval of the potatoes. . . . In the corner a family party was eating supper, steadily and happily. After a while, the woman who presided over the desk came down on the floor and joined them. They gave her a seat at their table.

"That is queer," Ann said.

"She is the proprietor's wife. They always are. I

doubt if a Frenchman could run a place like this without his wife at the desk. French *bourgeois* marriage is a pretty close partnership."

Ann envied the plump, competent-looking woman. Restaurant-keeping seemed, at the moment, to be a more satisfactory sort of thing than the steel business.

"What is it?" Casson urged. "What is the matter? Why do you look so sad?" He was looking at her in alarm.

"I was only thinking."

This plunged him into a depression greater than hers. "There is so much of your life that I know nothing about at all," he sighed. "I do not even know if you would prefer an ice, or fruit, for dessert."

Ann smiled once more, and chose fruit; the waiter brought her a bunch of tiny, light green grapes, and she ate them slowly, loath to be finished. The little room was hazy with smoke, and full of the odor of wine and rich exotic food. No one seemed in haste to leave; people sat on contentedly, drinking coffee or sipping *liqueurs*. They were very quiet; there was little laughter, and only murmured conversation. . . . Many of the boys and girls did not talk at all, but off at a distant table an intense young man was arguing fiercely with his girl,—pleading, evidently.

"Poor devil," Casson said, noticing him.

That night, for the first time, Ann saw a woman smoke in public, and she was undeniably shocked, although she hoped that she didn't show it. One of the younger and more childlike of the girls stuck a cigarette between her reddened lips, and her escort held a match to it. It flared up for an instant, throwing her cheek-bones into high relief, and showing the soft contour of her lifted chin. She drew in a great breath of smoke, and let it escape slowly. No one noticed her, and she was herself entirely unconscious.

After some time, Casson seemed to remember some-

thing. "I thought that we might go to the circus," he said.

"The circus?" No suggestion could have more amazed his companion, who knew only the canvas-tent variety, native to the United States.

"Yes—the *Cirque Medrano.* There is a very funny clown. You'll like it, I think."

He had some trouble in catching the waiter's eye; then he paid his bill, and they walked over to the door. There the proprietor was bowing them a good night, and from her cage, to which she had returned, his wife was smiling, too.

"What a darling place!" Ann exclaimed.

2

When Ann and Casson emerged from the tunnel-like entrance to the *Cirque Medrano,* she was momentarily bewildered by the confusion, and the glare of the light and color. An extraordinarily vocal audience was shouting to the performers: the place resounded to calls and laughter. . . . Gas lights flickered in profusion: it was like day in the great building. . . . Colors were splashed on everywhere—shouting colors, like yellow and red. The round amphitheater was crowded with people: from the ring on the floor they rose, circular row on row, until their heads almost pressed against the roof. Their leaning intent faces were curiously distinct in the flaring light which struck up from the ring.

All sorts were there: soldiers of the Republic in bright red and blue uniforms, with clinging companions, or in mannish groups, a target for feminine eyes. . . . The *bourgeois* family again: fat papas holding little girls on their sprawling knees; lean mothers, keeping a restraining hand on brown, fidgety little sons. . . . Poor young men at the top, with frowsy girls for companions; rich young men at the ringside with flashy

young women, who were objects of attention from the performers. The middle-aged were there, too, relaxed and happy, and even a scattering of patrician *jeunes filles,* carefully chaperoned by a stern parent. The shallow tiers were full of color: the whole place swam in a haze of smoke.

Tumblers were leaving the ring when the Americans came in. They were followed by a young woman on a chestnut horse—she was advertised as "The Engleesh Mees," Casson told Ann. She was dressed in a long dark green habit and a shining tall hat, and she sat very straight and proud on her horse; she made him trot and canter, and when bars were brought she put him over them—they were at least eighteen inches high —with truly British calm. She looked, Ann thought, like a nice girl.

All at once the music changed its tempo abruptly, and the well mannered chestnut rose on his hind legs, pawing the air. The "Engleesh Mees" sat apparently quite composed, but an extraordinary thing was happening to her. . . . Her long and decorous skirt had become unfastened. . . . The audience began to titter. . . . It was dropping off. . . . Frank laughter now, at this time-honored Gallic joke. . . . Flesh-colored tights are very dashing indeed, above riding boots and below a close fitting green basque. Ann found herself blushing. . . . A gesture, and the basque was gone, too; the "Engleesh Mees" was revealed, sitting nonchalantly in a side saddle, clad in the lightest of costumes, except for her boots and hat. . . . There was something about her pink knee curved around the horn which made people laugh. She laughed too, and winked at the crowd. All semblance of a nice girl was lost. . . . She slid to her feet in the flat saddle; she took off her hat and shied it over to an employee at the entrance. Her hair tumbled about her face: she spread her bare arms out like wings as the chestnut quickened

his pace. . . . Around and around they went, the dauntless little figure triumphant. The crowd shouted its approval.

"She has nice legs," Ann heard Casson saying, half to himself. She was stunned. For a moment she was sorry she had come. What a thing to say!

Clowns came next—clowns so funny that Ann shouted with laughter. She had never dreamed pantomime could be so comic. It was no wonder that people called out their names, endearingly. . . . One of them came in on a lumbering old horse, and burlesqued the "Engleesh Mees's" performance. The ring was strewn with flying garments, and nothing could be more ludicrous than his postures—just like enough to the girl's to be exquisitely funny. . . . They knocked one another down with extravagant brutality. . . . They sang, ridiculously. . . . They went through a preposterous dancing lesson, enlivened by invitations to members of the audience to join them. . . . One of them escaped from the others, and scrambled up over the tiers of seats: he came close to Ann, and she flinched back from his leering, painted face. . . . The other came after him: the whole place rocked with laughter. It was all amazingly funny, and delightfully childlike, too.

As she undressed that night, Ann reviewed her evening. She had had an extraordinarily good time—an even better time than the night before, amid Susanna's magnificence. The extraordinary innocence of the evening charmed her: she thought that the wickedness of Paris had been greatly exaggerated.

CHAPTER XXVIII

EMOTIONS

Susanna was enchanted at having an American woman friend in Paris.

"These foreigners don't know anything at all about what fun women can have together," she told Ann. "Men—men—men—all the time—morning, noon and night! There's something to be said for our system of keeping them on ice until after dark, even if it is provincial."

She and Ann drove about together in Susanna's splendid open victoria; they lunched together; they walked together for the sake of Susanna's figure; they went to the theater and to concerts together, and above all, they shopped together. Ann spent so much money that she was aghast: it slipped through her fingers like water. She was ashamed of herself, but she did not stop buying. The two women laughed together a great deal over their shopping, and everything else. Their light high spirits made them conspicuous in a land of more subtle women, but they had a thoroughly good time.

Whenever it was possible, Susanna included her friend in her gaieties. On her nights at the opera Ann was invariably in her box; she took her to several private musicales, and once to a ball. Ann had been rather nervous about that, but she enjoyed herself, after all. Titus was delightfully devoted, and his reprehensible experiences had stood him in good stead; he had

become a passable dancer. With him Ann evoked her early skill in waltzing. "We're all right together, what?" he would shout, as they glided intricately over the polished floors of the *beau monde.* Ann liked him better than she ever had, and found herself decreasingly sympathetic with his wife, who, after all, had plenty of beaux of her own, of the white-faced, black-pointed beard variety.

Susanna was clamorously sorry for herself, at any rate, but as time went on, it seemed to Ann that her discontent was largely conventional. She made a career of being unhappy.

"I know that Titus is unfaithful to me," she told her friend one day, "but I can't do anything about it. . . . People in our situation simply have to get on, and over here no one would blame him. . . . Men have a wonderful life! I am sure I wish I were a man."

Ann looked at her, perfect in her sleek good clothes. Jewels winked on her nervous fingers, and hung in the opening at her throat. She wondered if Susanna could really mean what she was saying. She couldn't imagine her, under any circumstances, doing a day's work. . . . She was not happy, of course, but Ann began to suspect it was because of concrete things,—because Titus was rude to her in public, or because he had refused to buy her something which she coveted,—and not because, now that she had him, she had failed to hold him. Notwithstanding the fact that Jefferson was an absolutely pleasure-loving person, and that he undoubtedly left no gross appetite unsatisfied, Ann came to believe that he had more cause for unhappiness than his wife, for he had a romantic quality which made his life seem glaringly unsatisfactory. Reluctantly, Ann came to the conclusion that Susanna was primarily a material little creature, but she believed the uncouth Titus to be a defeated idealist. The pity was that ideals evidently had little enough to do with his daily

life. She guessed that he had a lovely set of them, tarnished, it is true, but complete and childish, true and beautiful. It was his frustrated possibilities which made him in her eyes, a tragic figure.

He never talked to her of anything except the affairs of the moment, and he ordinarily gave a farcical turn to those. The only thing which he betrayed any serious affection for was his horses: he could not quite hide his pride in them, nor his delight when they were appreciated. Ann went through the stables with him one day, and was touched at his naive fondness for them. Their intimacy was measurably advanced by the experience.

It was on their return through the garden that he turned abruptly to her. "Are you really going back?" he asked.

"You mean back to America?" He nodded, leaning over her urgently. "Of course I am,—I sail in ten days."

Titus patted her shoulder, much as he had patted his grays, a moment before. "That's a good girl," he said. "I didn't know but what this town had got you, Ann. . . . I'd kind of hate to see you desert your children. . . . God,—if Susanna had had a child, there's nothing I wouldn't have given her!"

The little explosion made her want her own children acutely; she felt that she could scarcely bear to wait the necessary time. "Don't you worry," she said, and Titus laughed at the determination in her face. "Wild horses couldn't keep me off that boat!"

2

Casson's hours of practising were adjustable, and apparently what pupils he had were complaisant, for he was invariably at Ann's disposal whenever she was free. He was not at the entertainments to which Susanna took her: she looked for him there, in vain.

She had a better time with him than with older men, she decided: she had never known any one with whom she was so delightfully light-hearted. Almost every day they went out together, sometimes on sight-seeing expeditions, but oftener merely to lunch or dine. It seemed to Ann that she must have eaten in every restaurant in Paris, and yet there were always new ones awaiting her. She grew accustomed to sitting out on the sidewalk for coffee, and Casson's *liqueur;* it grew to be as natural to her as her discreetly housed life in Chicago had been, and fully as harmless, she thought.

They talked interminably, and principally of Casson. It seemed to be the easiest thing in the world for the young man to make the most surprising confidences: no one had ever talked to her so freely before. She knew how much money he had, and what he paid for his attic studio. She knew that he had never been in love, which she thought odd, and that he was very lonely. She knew not only his ambition to captivate the capitals of the world, but his daily difficulties, as well, for he allowed her to share the discouragements which make up, from day to day, the life of an artist, and she found them extraordinarily interesting. . . . After years of barren lack of confidence she could not help showing her delight in being so minutely consulted. . . . She gave him advice sometimes, but not often; it was only when he was unhappy over something which seemed to her to be unimportant, that she waxed sage. . . . She thought about his difficulties when she was alone; it was like reading some enchanting novel. It was not like real life at all.

The two went all about Paris together, in search of beautiful and interesting things. They went to concerts and the theater, too, and Ann learned to be a woman of the world about questionable plays. She was fast losing her Puritanical feeling in regard to many things. Certainly she would not have believed, six months

before, that she would have gone out day after day and night after night with a strange man,—with any man. . . . She clung to her conviction that she was sufficiently Casson's elder to excuse it.

Susanna, who was a great stickler for conventions, would have been horrified had she guessed the extent of Ann's indiscretions, but the fact that Casson's funds were low, and that they therefore frequented humble restaurants, saved her from being seen. Her Paris was as removed from Susanna's as if it had been on another continent.

After three weeks of this amusing life, Casson said to her one day, leaning his elbows on one of those clever French tables so obviously made for two, "I shall go mad if I don't sing to you."

"I've been wondering why you didn't. We can go up to Susanna's. You can use her piano."

"I don't want to sing there. I want to sing to you alone. Won't you—won't you come to my studio?"

This was a shock; Ann withdrew her elbows, and sat erect. "My dear boy, I am an old woman and you are a child, but surely you must see that I can't do that!"

"How old are you?" Casson demanded fiercely.

Ann blushed. "I am thirty-three."

"Well—I am twenty-eight. There's not so much difference between us:—not enough for you to talk like my mother, anyway. . . . I've never known any one to be a mother at five."

Ann was staggered. She had fallen into a comfortable habit of thinking that Casson was indefinitely her junior, and she told herself that she would never have allowed herself the freedom of action which she had been enjoying with the flushed young man before her had she not thought of him as barely more than a boy. . . . And yet, why not? Nothing had happened,—nothing had been said,—to which the most fastidious

might object. The delightful gay innocence of their relationship was unchanged, and nothing else mattered.

"You look much younger than that," she murmured mechanically.

He grinned at her like an impudent boy. "So do you. . . . Do you really mean that you won't come to my studio?" Ann nodded, firmly, and he capitulated. "Then we'll go to the Jeffersons' when Mrs. Jefferson is sure to be out. What is she doing this afternoon?"

"I think that she is driving to Versailles, for tea."

"Then we will go at once." He rapped impatiently on his table, to the horror of lingering patrons, and the waiter came scurrying up. "*L'addition, garçon!*" he said briskly. He was, all at once, in a tremendous hurry.

3

Titus' vast house was deserted, and Ann had an uncomfortable sense of being clandestine, as Casson led the way to the music-room. He established her in a comfortable chair, and brought a stool for her feet, before he turned to the piano.

"What do you want?" he asked her.

"*Aïda,* again."

"No. . . . That's too bombastic, just for you and me." He sat down before the piano, and ran his fingers over the keys. Ann felt just as she did when the orchestra tuned up, before some greatly anticipated performance.

He began with a gay little Neapolitan song, unimportant and charming. Ann laughed happily when it was over. "What an amusing thing!"

"Yes. One hears it on the streets in Naples—like this." He sang the end over again, burlesquing his own performance, his voice brazen and common.

Ann moved uneasily in her chair. "Don't," she protested.

Casson smiled across at her, with more sweetness than she had ever seen in his face. He chose an English ballad next, disarming in its homely simplicity. "Do you like that?" he asked, as he let his hands fall.

Ann smiled happily. "Indeed I do. How sweet ballads are—and how perfectly English!"

"Yes. . . . All cramped with British restraint, most of them. Here is one that isn't.

"I arise from dreams of thee
In the first, sweet sleep of night!"

Ann flinched back into her chair. He was singing differently. His manner was deeper; she had not known that he had so much dramatic power. . . . This was an appeal to emotion as well as to taste. . . . There was something naked about the beautiful English words. . . . She glanced briefly at Casson: he was singing with his handsome head held high, and his eyes were on her face. They had a searching look which made her drop her own. The closing words were ineffably moving:

"And led me, who knows how,
To thy chamber window, sweet."

There was a little silence, which she made no effort to break. She could hear the light fluttering of pages as Casson turned over some music which was on the piano. "Now we'll be more grandiose," he said blandly. "I'll sing you some tenor things from operas, and you will compare me to fat gentlemen in tights, to my great disadvantage."

It seemed to her that he must be singing for hours, and yet the afternoon sunlight continued to shine reassuringly in at the window. . . . Sometimes he did not even look at her, when he finished a song. She lost all self-consciousness; indeed, she lost all sense of any-

thing except the music, Casson's voice, and his beautiful intense look. She had never known anything like it. He translated her to another sphere, and all relation to ordinary life dropped away from her.

"I never knew any one could sing like that," she murmured at length, when he paused.

"I couldn't except to you."

The low words struck her like a weapon. They penetrated deep to some curiously vital spot. She could not smile, and turn them aside. She only sat looking at Casson questioningly.

Abruptly he rose from the piano. "Let's get out of here," he said. "Mrs. Jefferson will be coming home, and I couldn't bear to talk to her . . . to any one but you."

It did not occur to Ann to differ with him; she was conscious of no volition in the matter at all; she was entirely in his hands. Outside, they found a *fiacre,* and Casson handed her into it. "*Au Bois,*" he said, in a strange thick voice. . . . They started off with a jerk which broke Ann's trance.

"Where are we going?"

"Nowhere. . . . Anywhere. . . . Out of Paris. . . . We'll walk in the *Bois* for an hour: it is early."

She sighed. She felt almost too languid to walk, but the cooler air of late afternoon revived her somewhat. She did not speak at all, as they crossed the river, and began to climb the long slope of the *Champs Élysées.* . . . Now and then she glanced at Casson; he sat looking straight ahead, his mouth firmly set. . . . She thought that he was a little pale. . . . Feeling her gaze he turned, at length, and looked at her. His eyes smiled at her, although his mouth had still that odd look of determination. . . . He reached over and clasped her hand for an instant. His hand was very warm, and somehow comforting. "My dear," he said, and his voice was the dangerous voice of the singer.

She was startled at that, and sat erect. "Don't you think we would better go back?" she demanded.

Casson grinned at her boyishly. He had withdrawn his hand at her first movement. "I do not," he answered firmly.

"I think we had better," she murmured.

He was looking at her now deeply. "Do you want to go back?"

"No," she said truthfully. She had never wanted anything less in her life.

"Then what is the matter? You are not afraid to go with me, are you?"

She almost thought that he wanted her to be afraid, absurd as she knew she must be. "Of course not."

"Then we will go on."

They passed the *Arc de Triomphe*, gilded by the full declining sun. . . . They passed a region of *hôtels* and empty spaces. . . . They crawled along the boulevard, and, presently, passing the old city walls, they entered the shadowy *Bois*. . . . Twilight was established there, under the high trees; it was only in *allées* that the sun penetrated in long slanting lanes of palpable gold, although the plumy tops of the trees swam in waves of yellow light, like torches. Casson leaned forward, and directed the driver to stop.

"He can rest his horse," he told Ann, "while we stretch our legs a bit."

It was extraordinarily pleasant in the woods, walking along an artificially charming path. A cool green light filtered down through the thick branches. . . . Green sod was underfoot, soft to the feet, and springy. . . . Even the tree trunks were covered with a close green moss. . . . The unimportant twittering of birds resigning themselves to the night filled the air. . . . Ann looked back, and down the straight path she could see their equipage standing at the end of the vista: the horse's head drooped, and the *cocher* was slumped over

on his seat,—half asleep, evidently. It gave her a happy safe feeling, to see him there, awaiting her.

After a while they turned down a path which seemed even more sweetly lovely than the one they had first chosen. . . . They walked a few steps, and were as completely isolated as though they were really in deep woods. "We mustn't get lost," Ann said brightly, her voice almost as chirping as the birds'.

"I don't care what happens to us." He looked as if this were true; he had a desperate look on his emotional young face.

Ann let this drop. As a matter of fact, she was, herself, singularly indifferent to their immediate fate. Casson began to talk, at length, in broken patches, difficult to catch. She was obliged to listen intently.

"When you are gone," he said. "Nothing left. . . . Nothing at all. . . . How can I sing? . . . How can I hope to please the director? . . . Alone. . . . After these weeks. . . . My God!" He broke off a little switch, and struck desperately at the side of the path, as they walked. "I can't stand it!" he said clearly. "I can't stand it!"

Ann was frightened; at least, she supposed that was why her breath caught raggedly in her throat. She put her hand timidly on Casson's sleeve. "Don't," she begged breathlessly.

The effect of this was astonishing. He whirled upon her in a sort of fury. "Don't you care at all?" he demanded loudly. "Aren't you human in the least? Does it mean nothing to you to have made me love you?" With the word he broke off, and the two stood still, staring at each other, aghast.

"I wish you hadn't said that," Ann faltered.

Suddenly Casson's anger dropped from him: he became tender. "Why? We have known it for a long time." He came very close to her, and hung over her, but he did not touch her.

"I didn't know," she declared, with some spirit, but with the words, her voice fluctuated. Had she known? She wondered. Was it possible to know, and not know that she knew? Was it this hidden knowledge which had made her companionship with Casson so sweet? She closed her eyes. "I never dreamed . . ." she murmured. She felt him take her hand in his warm and comforting clasp. . . . She opened her eyes to find his face very close above her own. . . . They kissed, and she was obliged to cling to him, lest she should fall. She never thought about Peter at all. . . . Not then.

Casson was murmuring endearments to her. "Darling," he said, over and over, his cheek against her cheek. He did not frighten her at all; he was extraordinarily gentle.

All at once, full comprehension swept bleakly over Ann. She tore herself away, roughly. She backed across the narrow path, and cowered into the verdure at the side. She covered her face with her hands. Shiverings ran over her distressingly. She could not speak.

Casson was close beside her. "What is it?" he asked urgently. He was afraid to touch her.

She faced him desperately. "I am remembering," she whispered brokenly.

"Don't remember anything but me!"

She faced him passionately. "Don't you see that I can't do that? You've never seen my children . . . my—family! They are real. . . . They are more real than you!"

He brushed all this aside. "Do you love me?" he urged. "Do you love me?"

Ann was trying desperately hard to be honest. For some strange reason honesty seemed to be the one admirable quality which she could bring to her aid. "I am afraid I do," she admitted. She was devastated by the sudden knowledge, but she could not deny it.

Casson wasted no more time: he caught her in his arms, and kissed her thoroughly. Her cheeks, her eyes, her temples, her lips, all were tingling from his tender roughness. She clung to him giddily; she could not speak, and he held her close, savagely.

All at once an unexpected sound recalled to them the existence of others. It was only the sharp bark of a dog, close at hand, but the two sprang apart, looking nervously from left to right. Near them was an inquiring French poodle; he was taking a genial interest in them, as a French dog well might. His plumed tail waved a friendly overture to them, and his pink nose wrinkled ingratiatingly. He was a man of the world, that poodle.

Casson said, "Damn!" The exaltation was swept from his face.

Ann was trembling. She was, already, glad of the intervention. She wanted time to think—to collect herself.

Voices drifted through the trees; it was evident that the poodle was not alone. "Come on," Casson said urgently. He took Ann's arm, and hurried her back in the direction from which they had come.

"Where are you going?"

At the end of the path they turned into, their *fiacre* was still standing; she was relieved, but amazed. It seemed to her more like a matter of hours than of moments since they had left it, but the driver still dozed on his box. "There is a little place near here where I have stayed before," Casson told her. "We will dine there."

A stubborn resistance arose within Ann, but she said nothing. When she stepped into the low hung carriage her knees trembled; she held her hand out before her, and it was shaking, too. She leaned forward and stopped Casson as he would have joined her.

"What is it?"

"You stay. . . . I am going back to Paris."

"No!"

"Yes. . . . I want to go back alone. . . . I must."

"I won't let you!"

She smiled at him uncertainly. "I must think things over."

"No! Don't think—feel!"

"No. . . . If I am going to—love you, it must be because I have decided that I must,—not because I am —just carried away. . . . Don't be angry with me. . . . Forgive me,—but let me go."

He was suddenly sulky. "All right! *Cocher, au Grand Hôtel!*"

For a moment Ann looked long and deeply into his eyes; his young and beautiful face was ardently reproachful. . . . The next thing she was conscious of was that she was jogging toward the city. Before her, as the night drew on, a glow diffused itself in the sky. It was the aureole of Paris.

CHAPTER XXIX

ESCAPE

The night was like a trance to Ann. . . . She undressed, and, because she was utterly tired, she got into bed, but she could not have said whether she slept or not. She did not even think, as she had previously identified that process. Without volition, she recalled Casson's look. . . . Some of the things he said. . . . His touch. . . . She was acutely miserable, but she was, also, elated. Once a faint but disturbing recollection of the lovers of her youth swung into the arc of her understanding. . . . Hendricks Rensselaer,—clumsy, sulky and jealous. . . . The Italian,—beautiful and romantic. . . . And Peter. Defensively she thrust him back. She was utterly unable to plan. . . . She swung, rudderless, in the strong current of her emotion.

Toward morning she fell asleep, and the chambermaid, finding her, forbore to awaken her. . . . It was perhaps eleven o'clock when a light imperative rap on her door brought her to drowsy consciousness. "Come in," she called, and added, "*Entrez,*" as she struggled into fuller understanding.

It was Susanna. She came into the room with a rustle of draperies, a torrent of greeting, and an aroma of the outside world. "You lazy thing!" she cried. "Is this how you spend your time in Paris? I've been up for hours."

Ann sat up, bewildered. She snapped open the cover of her watch, which lay on the bedside table. "I must have forgotten to wind it," she complained, and she reached for her key to do so. "What time is it?"

"Eleven o'clock."

"No?" With the startled interrogation remembrance of the previous night came flooding over her, and she dropped back into her pillows, overcome.

"You'll have to get up. . . . I want you to go to England with us to-day!"

"To England?"

"Yes. Titus has business.—He says it's business.—Anyway, he wants me to come along. I won't leave you here for your last week! You'll have to come with us. You can take your boat at Liverpool."

Ann said nothing at all. She lay looking up at the blank ceiling above her bed. She was thinking it was true that God moved mysteriously. "All right," she said, at length, in a singularly toneless voice.

"Well, I must say you don't seem just wild about it! . . . However, I suspect you're sleepy. . . . You'll have your hands full to get packed; I'd better send you a maid to do it for you. We take the two o'clock train."

The necessity for action aroused Ann. "I'll be ready," she said. "Susanna, why did you ever let me buy all this truck?" She looked about her room as she spoke; it was congested with boxes and bundles.

"You'll have some duty to pay, won't you? But you'll be glad when you get the things home. . . . I've never regretted anything I have ever bought. The only time I make a mistake is when I don't buy!"

Three hours! Three hours in which to pack,—to rush out and get one or two last things,—a present for Nora,—a French doll for Annabel. . . . Three hours, or what was left of them, in which to write an important letter,—the letter of her life!

She was determined to do that first, whatever happened, so she sent the *concierge* out to buy trunks, and sat, surrounded by an amazing clutter of extravagances which were being packed by a voluble maid, entirely oblivious. . . . She might have been alone in the hotel. . . . She might have been alone in Paris.

She wrote note after note, but each one seemed more unsatisfactory to her than the last, and she tore them all to bits. . . . She wanted to write something which should express the feeling of desolation now devastating her, but after several attempts, she gave that up; it couldn't, she found, be coherently written. . . . She then tried to write simply a love-letter, but she tore it up after half a page: she couldn't put on paper sentiments from which she recoiled in horror. . . . Finally, she wrote:

"My dear:

"I am going away,—now, in a few moments. I shall not see you again. I hope I haven't hurt you dreadfully.

"Ann."

She put the folded paper in an envelope, and sealed it,—then tore it open again, and added impulsively,

"My address will be 'Bailey's Hotel, London.'"

She felt better after that. She had made the great moral gesture of closing her door,—and then she opened it a tiny crack; a thin gleam of hope glimmered in her darkness. . . . She did not say to herself, "He may come," but with every fiber of her being she hoped that he would.

At the end everything was so cataclysmic that she had little time for coherent thought. Somehow, she got herself and her bags into one cab, and another followed with her trunks. On the way to the station she stopped

and bought an enchanting doll. It said, "Ma-Ma," when one pulled a string, and was, as the salesman assured Ann, "*Très chic.*" It was every inch a Parisienne. . . . Her note to Casson she had sent off by a messenger, and all the time, no matter what she was doing, Ann's mind followed his careless way through the city, an unconscious carrier of doom.

2

At the station Titus awaited her, and with what seemed like miraculous ease he established her in a compartment which he had reserved. . . . Her things were tucked into racks and under seats, and she was alone for the moment. . . . She was at a window, looking out at a retreating Paris. . . . She was struggling with a sensation which was panic, simply. . . . Why was she running away? . . . How could she be leaving? . . . Had her note reached Casson yet? . . . Had he been at home when the boy arrived? . . . Had he been singing, happy in his anticipation of seeing her? . . . What was he thinking of her? . . . Would he understand? . . . Did she? . . . Gray houses. . . . Flashing street ends. . . . Away off above everything the butte of Montmartre! Life was real there. . . . Perhaps there wasn't much else to life, after all. . . . Rules, conventions, decency,—what did they amount to? Everything passed. There was Susanna; she wore her scarlet becomingly! . . . Gardens. . . . A heartbreaking glimpse of a restaurant with its flock of tables outside, familiar and reminiscent. . . . Chimneys sticking up above close trees. . . . Little houses, intimate and withdrawn. . . . A gate, closed on a shadowed path. . . . Flowers beneath shuttered windows. . . . Enclosed. . . . Private. . . . Secret. She closed her eyes, and was startled to feel a tear slip through her lashes.

Susanna had brought a great hamper of lunch. When Paris was actually gone, she opened it, and summoned Ann.

"You must eat a lot," she said. "The thing to do when you are going on a boat is simply to stuff, and then you won't notice the motion at all."

"Mrs. Baker has just the opposite idea."

"Oh,—Mrs. Baker!" Susanna's scorn was immense. "I know,—because an admiral told me!"

This was convincing, and in addition the luncheon was delicious. They had *pâté de foies gras* sandwiches, as well as *poulet rôti* and salad. Titus opened champagne with a loud "Plop!"

"Here's to your return, Ann!" he said, glass in hand.

"Oh, yes!" she cried, almost tearfully.

She was gay over the impromptu luncheon; she wondered at herself, but some protective instinct involuntarily summoned laughter and sparkle to cover her despair. Susanna never even so much as suspected.

The Jeffersons had by no means as many friends in London as they had in Paris. Titus, it is true, brought men to the hotel for dinner with him every night, but they met very few women, and his wife spoke bitterly of some of them who had accepted her hospitality across the channel. So far as Ann could see they were gay enough; they sampled every event the city had to offer, and she went through with it like a somnambulist; it amazed her to find that no one noticed her abstraction,—that no one guessed. She lived only for one thing,—the mail.

The first day,—the second day,—and no letter. She said to herself, "He must be coming!" She pictured him standing at the desk, asking for her. She could almost visualize his slim strong figure, and his singularly beautiful face. When she came in she always inquired. "No, Madam,—no one." Her feet, which had

hurried up the steps, dragged on the stairs. . . . Nothing.

On the third day the letter came. It was light in her hand,—a thin letter. . . . She ran up-stairs so quickly that her heart pounded uncomfortably. . . . She was brusk with Susanna, who called a question. She locked her door, and stood for a moment with the square white envelope pressed tightly against her heart. She had become alive again, miraculously.

"Dear Ann:

"How could you leave me in the lurch like this? I have had two bad days, thinking of you.

"I would have gone over to London after you, except that, as ill luck would have it, I have at last heard from the director of the opera. He has set my trial for to-morrow afternoon. I don't see how I can do myself any sort of justice, but I'll write you about it.

"When are you coming over again? I won't be able to stand it without you long.

"I shall sing *Cèleste Aïda* for the director, and I think *La Donna é Mobile* from Rigoletto. They make a good contrast.

"Don't forget me.

"Yours,

"Edward Casson.

"I hope you have a good voyage."

Ann stood by the window for a few moments, the letter in her hands. She was feeling horribly let down, although she could not have said what it was she had expected. With dreary philosophy she told herself that she would probably have been disappointed with anything. . . . He was not coming over; that fact struck through her depression. . . . Of course he couldn't, she thought loyally. . . . The director meant so much to him,—everything, really. The second time she read her letter it did not seem so cold. She tried to be tolerant, and told herself that Casson was hurt and angry,

like a boy. Little Hendricks was like that, sometimes. She could not help watching her mail for another letter, but none came.

3

On Ann's final night ashore, Susanna came into her room after their return from the theater. "It's all hours," she announced, "but I simply must have a talk with you. . . . I have wanted to ask you—how is Daniel?"

Ann winced. "Daniel Lunt?"

Susanna laughed, uneasily. "I dare say you think his name should never pass my lips! . . . Of course I did treat him badly, but I am simply dying to know about him. Is he prosperous?"

"I think so. He is one of the leading lawyers in the West."

"He hasn't married?"

"No."

"That's rather a pity, considering he got so little out of being married to me. . . . We were never suited; but he didn't ever really care anything about me. . . . He was always in love with you."

"Susanna!"

"Well, well! . . . Poor old Daniel! He never told you? . . . I knew it for years. I didn't care."

"Please don't talk like this, Susanna. I hate it."

Susanna gave her friend a long look. "You are a funny woman," she said. "You're full of temperament, yet you've never had an affair! I hope Peter knows he is in luck."

Ann turned away, in order to hide her face. She said nothing. She had no impulse to be confidential, and she paid no attention at all to her friend's amazing statement in regard to Daniel Lunt. She thought it was in bad taste, as well as quite unfounded.

She left London early in the morning, but in spite

of the uncomfortable hour, both Susanna and Titus went with her to the train. Ann kissed them each good-by with the most sincere affection. Nothing remained of her feeling of censure for them. She had only the liveliest hope that they might continue to make a success of their reprehensible alliance.

She went on board ship in the late afternoon. The Murrays were at the rail, delighted to see her. They looked very familiar, and curiously safe, and the homely talk she had with them at supper, largely about people and things in Chicago, made her late hectic experiences seem strangely unreal. It was not until later, when she shut the door of her stateroom upon her friends, that Ann's unhappiness returned, and, already blunted by circumstances of her every-day life, it was, although she did not know it, less keen. She reread Casson's letter, notwithstanding the fact that she could have repeated it. She remembered when she had left home her fear had been that she had lost her capacity to feel, and she smiled ironically, with eyes full of tears.

CHAPTER XXX

HOME AGAIN

As THE boat drew into the dock, Ann, leaning on the rail and looking idly over the crowd, was surprised to see Daniel Lunt's face looking up at her.

"I had business in New York," he explained, when they met, "so I told Pete I would see you through the customs." He looked on with amusement as trunk after trunk was added to the enormous total of Ann's luggage. "You didn't waste your time, that's evident," he said, and later, "It's just as well Pete has had a good year!"

"Tell me about the children," she begged, as they waited on the dock. "Are they well? . . . Have they grown? . . . Is Annabel pretty?"

The travelers were going straight through to Chicago, and Daniel Lunt, declaring that he was ready to leave, attached himself to their party. Ann wondered a little that Peter had not come on to New York, but she was not in a mood to be critical. A curious result of her own escapade was an immense charity toward her husband, and the fact that he had prevented her from sharing the fascination of his business had become trivial as compared with her own culpability. More than ever before in her life she felt that she owed Peter something, but this was not so much confidence as it was service. She decided, rather grimly, that she would never tell him about Casson: she would never tell

any one; it was singularly her affair, and her lover's, but she was resolved, secretly, to do her best to make it up to Peter.

She had a long talk with Daniel Lunt while the train made its leisurely way through the garnered fields of Indiana.

"I may as well tell you that I advised Pete not to come to meet you."

"Why?"

"I did not want him to make a mistake. I have had my eye on him while you have been away. . . . He has been damned unhappy!"

"He told you so?"

"Lord, no! He is a queer Dick, your Peter. . . . He simply can't open up, and he never will be any different, I am afraid, but he is entirely devoted to you, Ann. I have watched him. . . . I almost hoped he wasn't." The lawyer smiled wryly as he spoke, but she was not looking at him, and he continued, "He is ready to do anything under heaven you want. I came down to New York to tell you that. I didn't have any business."

Ann's face softened. "What a good friend you are, Dan! . . . You don't have to worry about me any more. I'm cured. As a matter of fact, I think Peter is too good for me."

"Don't be absurd," Daniel exclaimed, and for some time he looked at Ann covertly. She realized that she had come very near giving herself away.

As she approached Chicago the strong tentacles of her home reached out and grasped her, and everything else became unimportant. She could scarcely believe that in the dream of a love affair she had come near losing consciousness of this definite reality. The family life which she had formed on the strong rock of character and built up by constant devotion, claimed

her. She approached it without regret; it was inevitable; it was her fate.

When the train drew into the station, there leapt into her vision three figures like steps. . . . Her heart beat strongly. . . . Surely the taller one could not be Hendricks. It was impossible that he had grown as much as that! . . . And was that great boy Peets? He was dressed in a Scotch suit which she had sent him on her first visit to London; the kilts blew about his sturdy legs, and the ribbon in the cap fluttered in the breeze. Beside him, Annabel, rosy and flaxen in the sunlight, was waving her hand mechanically.

Pride submerged all other feeling in Ann as the train gradually came to a stop beside her children. She was only half-conscious of their father standing there, too. In a moment she was kissing them,—was feeling their soft delicious contact,—was trying to overcome Peets' shy withdrawal. She returned Peter's kiss absent-mindedly.

They all crowded into a carriage together, leaving Daniel Lunt looking somberly after them. The children were clamorously glad to see their mother: Peets and Annabel quarreled as to which one should sit on the seat with her, and the matter was settled by Ann's taking the little girl on her lap. They fingered her umbrella,—her bonnet strings,—her watch chain,—her cheeks, with impersonal and enchanting excitement. Hendricks was firing questions one after the other.

"How big was the boat? How fast did it go? Was it faster than a train? What did you bring me, mummie?" . . . And then a general chorus. . . . "Yes, mummie, what did you bring me?"

Suddenly Ann was surprised to see that the carriage turned south. "Where are we going?" she demanded. She had expected to be taken to the cottage where she had left the family when she went away.

"I have a surprise for you," Peter said, self-consciously, his wife thought. She could see that he was making signs to quiet the children,—warning them not to give his secret away.

They continued to drive south, and finally they stopped on Prairie Avenue before an immense new house built of chocolate-colored stone. To Ann, her taste awakened by European travel, it was as featureless as a frosted cake.

"What do you think of it?" Peter asked her, in the same defensive tone he adopted when putting through a business deal.

She did not have to answer him, for immediately a chorus arose within the carriage: "It's ours, mummie?" "That's the surprise, mummie!" "You never guessed it, did you, mummie?" "Papa has been so 'fraid it wouldn't be finished in time!"

Ann was stunned. She knew that Peter wanted to build a house, but it had never occurred to her that he would go ahead without her. She knew so well the kind of house she wanted that she could hardly bring herself to enter this one which he had miraculously made ready for her. She thought of Susanna's *salons*, and of the elegance of her beautiful house. She thought, ruefully, of the French furniture which she had bought in Paris.

The door was opened by a butler. This was almost as great a shock to Ann as the house itself had been. She wondered how Nora got on with a butler. She wondered, glancing at the smiling, informally dressed man at the door, how she would. . . . Although the house stood on a corner and had a yard all about it, the hall was rather dark. The woodwork was heavy and ornate, and the walls were covered with lincrusta Walton, in a pattern of terra cotta and gold. On the right was the parlor. It was an unexpectedly attractive room,—very long and light, with windows to the west

on the street, and to the east overlooking the lake. Her foreign furniture would not be so bad here, Ann thought. "I'll write Susanna to find me an old marble mantle," she decided. "And I'll paint this horrible woodwork white."

Across the hall was the library, lined by built-in cases with glass doors, where a few sparse books were placed. The woodwork was maple inlaid with panels of ebony which was in turn ornamented with gilt lines remotely suggesting an Egyptian origin. Ann realized, looking at it, that all the woods of the Occident and the Orient were undoubtedly represented in her new home.

The dining-room was in the rear. It was a pleasant place of informal shape, with a bay window overlooking the lake and the Illinois Central Railroad tracks, where the trains, partly hidden by a high wall, ran along the shore. It was a huge room, larger than many hotel dining-rooms which Ann had seen on her travels, but she thought that it could be made attractive.

Up-stairs the house was so large that the family were all on one floor,—Annabel in a nursery at the back, and the boys in the front. Over the parlor there were two rooms: Peter led the way to them somewhat self-consciously, Ann thought. The one to the west had a masculine look about it, which she found, for some reason she did not define, to be disconcerting.

"This is my room," her husband was saying in a successfully offhand manner. "Yours is in there."

Ann stared at him in amazement. "Oh," she said, "am I to have my own room?"

"I thought you might like it, now that you have been away so long."

Ann followed him into the adjoining apartment. It was large and airy, with walls painted a soft gray, and stenciled in panels of rose pink. Their original bedroom suite stood sparsely about, meager and inadequate in such palatial surroundings.

"I have only bought what furniture seemed necessary," Peter was saying. "Dan thought you might like to get your own."

Ann's eyes filled with tears, and to hide them she went over to the window and stood looking out at the expanse of lake. It was the hour of sunset and the afterglow had painted it with brilliant colors. A great many things, some of them unrelated, flashed into her mind as she stood there, her slim back to the room which was to be hers. Then she turned, and meeting her husband's anxious look, she said humbly: "You are much too good to me, Peter."

He stood where he was, surprised. He was rooted to the carpet. Ann went over to him, and putting her arms around his neck, she kissed him. She was very glad to kiss him. She was fonder of him than she had been in a long time, and if Mr. Thackeray was correct in saying that there was a difference between loving and being in love, she did not propose to plumb it.

CHAPTER XXXI

SETTLING DOWN

In settling down after her return from Europe, Ann made an amazing discovery. She found that it was possible for her not only to appear convincingly tranquil, but actually to be completely absorbed in domestic life, with every hour of her busy days filled, and at the same time always to be conscious of an emotional preoccupation. She found this curiously upsetting, and the fact that no one observed a difference in her made her wonder if all the people she knew protected secret places in their lives, where little shrines were set up before which slender lamps of memory burned brightly.

To herself she seemed to be extraordinarily changed. Her experiences in Europe had awakened her: her contact with life was more direct, and her sensibilities were greatly developed. She was a more understanding woman than she had been, and very much more generous-minded. . . . Her interest in life was greatly increased with her discovery that it was not the simple thing she had fancied it to be.

When her new house was furnished, she copied Susanna's custom of serving tea every afternoon at five o'clock. She was the first woman in town to attempt it, and her friends readily formed a habit of dropping in late in the afternoon. The innovation of serving an extra and unnecessary meal was greatly discussed, with approbation by those who participated, and with disapproval by those who did not, but Ann

was untroubled by this criticism, or by the fact that her new French clothes also made a sensation. Frocks which had passed unnoticed in Susanna's glittering *salons* electrified the discreet parlors of Chicago, and Mrs. Baker told her young friend that in her opinion it was fully as unfashionable to be ahead of the style as behind it, but Ann did not care. There was something in outraging stupidly conventional people which stimulated her spirits; it made her feel attractive.

Peter was well pleased. He wanted his wife to dramatize his success, and he liked to see her dressed in clothes which made other women gasp. Ann was mistaken in believing that no one found her changed by her foreign tour, for dimly her husband perceived a difference, but as change was what he had sent her abroad for he had no complaint to make. Certainly she seemed gay enough, and he delighted in her high spirits, although there was sometimes an unfathomable quality in her gray eyes which made him a trifle uneasy.

It was about this time that he recognized Ann had a "touch" which was beyond him. He was beginning to know something about pictures;—where the market was,—what canvases came into it, and something of what should be paid for them,—but notwithstanding the fact that he bought well enough to attract the notice of connoisseurs, he had little instinctive taste. He knew vaguely the sort of atmosphere he wanted in his house, but he was powerless to achieve it, and he realized that Ann had the knack of it. She could create charm in a room, and while he thought her French furnishings queer and her chairs uncomfortable, he had to admit to himself that they gave his house distinction. No one else had a drawing-room in which old gilt gleamed softly, and curtains of rose-colored French brocade hung in lustrous folds. He felt it to be the kind of background a man of his importance in the iron busi-

ness should have, and he was never better satisfied than when he was seated in his vast dining-room, serving elaborate dinners, and giving his friends vintage wines and big Havana cigars.

Men important to the building of the West sat about his long table,—kings of their various lines,—empire builders and despoilers, practically every one of them. Men came there who had gone into the wilderness after lumber, to live with Indian tribes while making their fortunes, and railroad men who had weathered the panic. Manufacturers of all sorts came,—makers of farm implements, of car wheels, of carriages. Grain men were there, and pork packers, and a sprinkling of lawyers and bankers, and always, as a matter of course, the minister of the church which the Smiths attended. They were all good trenchermen, as well as good talkers, and they ate Peter's food with gusto.

The wives of these men interested their host very little. He said gloomily of himself that he was not a ladies' man, and it was true that he had little aptitude for the gentler sex. He found it increasingly difficult to talk to women; they had for him no quality of companionship, and he sank into heavy silences with them. He wondered at his friend Daniel Lunt's facility. The lawyer treated ladies as if they were human beings, and as a result he was extremely popular with them. The unfortunate episode of his divorce, which had clouded his life for a time, was forgotten, and he enjoyed all the delightful advantages of being a single man. No one else in town was invited out to dinner so often as he.

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Her gay and occupied life did not mean that Ann forgot Casson. She could not forget him, although she did her best whole-heartedly to play the part which she

had assumed on her return. He simply would not stay out of her mind, and for a long time she thought of him countless times a day, in keen unrelated flashes. . . . She lived in the constant hope of a letter from him. He wrote a few times at widely separated intervals, but he was not an inspired correspondent, and she got more pleasure from his handwriting on the envelope than she did from the stilted letter it contained. She knew that he was working hard; that he had been given an opportunity to sing a minor part at the opera; that he was well. In return she told him that her children had grown; that she had a new house; that she was delighted to hear of his success. Each time she heard, there was a longer interval between the letters, and she forced herself, in turn, to allow a corresponding amount of time to pass before she wrote her answer. Finally, the correspondence died, not dramatically, but merely from innutrition, and still she did not stop thinking about Casson. The effect he had made upon her was too deep; it was not only that she cared for him; her experience with him had made her a different woman.

It made her, too, vastly more tolerant of Peter. In the lurid light of her own escapade, his mere taciturnity seemed to her supremely blameless, and she could not understand how she managed to get herself into such a a state over it. . . . She did not, as a matter of fact, now want to hear about the steel business; she was convinced that she would be supremely bored should Peter, all at once, begin talking exhaustively to her about it. Sometimes she almost thought that he wanted to, for occasionally he gave her tentative fragments of his confidence, but she found it difficult to keep her mind on what he was saying. It was too late for that.

She said to Daniel Lunt, "How could you resist telling me what a fool I was all those years when I was being so ridiculous because poor dear Peter did not make a confidante of me? Who is a wife to expect

to be confided in? . . . Have you seen my new ear-rings?"

"You ask Peter for bread, and he gives you stones?"

"There is something to be said for his method!" Ann declared, turning her head from side to side to show Lunt the size and brilliancy of the diamonds in her ears.

She came nearer being in confidential relations with Daniel than any one else, and often she had an impulse to tell him about Casson, but she never did. Irrational though she knew it to be, she could not tell any one because she had never told Peter.

She was glad that she had left Paris when she did, for had she lingered she felt that she could never have returned to Peter, and life apart from him was entirely beyond her comprehension. As time went on the thing she came to repent about the whole affair was the tragedy she was sure it must have been to her temperamental lover. She hated to think of his frustration, and she pictured him grown cynical and disillusioned because of her. She blamed herself for not seeing what was coming, and saving him the pain of his disappointment. . . . Would she have saved him? She wondered. In looking back it sometimes seemed to her a miracle that she had summoned the strength of mind to leave Paris when she did.

She had been at home for more than two years when she realized that she was to have another baby, and her feeling about it was pure delight. Her older children were rapidly getting away from her; they were developing personalities of their own, and she often found them difficult. The thought of a baby in her life again, soft and helpless, and dependent, melted her heart with something which would have been joy had it not been more solemn, and she took the most meticulous care of herself during the months before her confinement.

Peter, too, was delighted at the idea of having

another child. He was becoming so colossally successful,—he was piling up so gross a fortune,—that he felt the need of a number of descendants to inherit it. He would have been glad of many children to share the burden of his triumph with him.

He was like a Midas with a golden touch. Lean years no longer affected him, except so far as they sometimes gave him an opportunity to buy up a competitor cheap. Shortly after he built his house, he put up new works on the shore of the lake south of the city, where ore and coal could be dumped at his own docks. He built two blast furnaces there, larger than any the West had yet seen, and called them the "Annie" and the "Annabel," in compliment to his wife and daughter. When they came into blast they revolutionized the Chicago iron industry; in building furnaces which turned out over a hundred tons of iron a day, Peter issued a challenge to Carnegie himself.

He was proud of the perfection of his magnificent new plant. No device was too new-fangled for him to experiment with, and once it had proved its worth, no equipment was too recent or too expensive to be thrown out and replaced by it. His directors groaned over the amount of money spent, but Peter easily convinced them that the important thing was to hurry, no matter at what cost,—to take advantage of the market,—to spur on the great steel age.

The only change Peter balked at was the inevitable one in his working force. He no longer knew his employees by name; no more, as he went among them, could he stop to inquire after a sick wife or child, and the days when his people greeted him with the cheerful grin of friendship were gone. Immigration from the south of Europe and the Balkans had set in, and his works were filled with black-browed Italians and Slavs. They talked strange languages among themselves, and

they frowned sullenly at Peter. Many of the old men had followed the plant to the south side: they had, for the most part, been made minor bosses, and they stood between Peter and his new hands. Gradually a realization had grown in the works that there was a difference in the point of view of labor and the employer. There was unrest among the men and constant demands for higher wages and a shorter day. "Agitators" were fired ruthlessly, but still the discontent grew.

Peter was enraged by it. "I'll run my works as I please, or close down!" he declared. He could not understand Daniel Lunt's philosophical interest in the developing struggle between capital and labor; it struck him too near home.

A bad feature of the new plant was that it cut Peter off from his friends. Now that he worked in South Chicago, he was seldom to be seen at the table in the club where he had been accustomed to take lunch every day. Instead, he ate in the company restaurant with the heads of his departments, and no one thought of questioning anything he said, which was bad both for him and for the younger men.

His hours were difficult. He took a seven o'clock train every morning, and it was late when he came home. His one relaxation was driving. The days were gone when he drove about town in a high buggy and hitched his mare outside places of business, but for his own use he still chose fast, long-tailed horses of the lean Kentucky type: every morning he drove to the station behind them.

His children he scarcely knew, but as he had no realization whatever of this fact, it did not disturb him. They seemed, all three of them, to do well enough in the private schools they attended, although Peter used to say, taking a certain amount of pleasure in the statement, that they were no students; he did not, as a matter of fact, believe in education, although he was

not so passionate about it as newspaper interviews with him led one to believe.

Some day, he assumed, Hendricks and Peter, Jr., would come into the works, and he counted on the time arriving when they would share with him the responsibility of the management, but he counted upon it as one might count upon a miracle from God. He did nothing whatever to bring it to pass, and in no way did he prepare the boys for what seemed to him their inevitable future.

The baby was a son, greatly to his father's delight, and to his mother's hidden disappointment, as she had hoped for a second daughter. Her regret was fleeting, however, as from the very beginning he seemed to her to be a uniquely charming creature. He had a more nervous temperament than the other children: he was the sort of baby who jumped at sudden sounds, and he was the only one of Ann's brood who was a light and irregular sleeper. He cried more than his brothers and sister had, and his mother thought that he laughed much earlier. He liked to laugh. When he was nothing more than an infant, he would chuckle aloud at things that pleased him, and long before he reached an articulate age he had a way of cocking one eyebrow when spoken to which gave an amusing look of humor to his vacuous baby's face. His mother found him singularly engaging. He lighted her whole life for her.

He was named for Daniel Lunt, which pleased that distinguished lawyer more than any other tribute his successful life had brought him. Every one called the boy "Dannie." As time went on his large circle of intimates seldom spoke of him by any other name.

PART THREE—THE CAGE

CHAPTER XXXII

THE NEXT GENERATION

ANNABEL SMITH'S "coming out," when she was eighteen years old, was a great event. It began at four o'clock in the afternoon, when coupés and carriages commenced driving up to the striped awning which ran, a gay tunnel, to the curb before the house, and ended at five the following morning, when the young people's dance which brought the festivities to a close broke up.

Ann and her daughter received in the drawing-room, one in white and the other in mauve, surrounded by floral tributes from their friends, and in the dining-room the most popular "buds," in pale pinks and blues, poured tea and chocolate from caterers' urns, and recommended *marrons* and little cakes to their mothers' friends. There was a mandolin orchestra under the stairs which furnished a tinkling accompaniment to the hum of talk, and in the new picture gallery, which was opened for the first time that day, waiters served punch and mulled claret.

The young women who "poured," together with an appropriate number of young men, remained to dinner. They sat in the dining-room at a great round table decorated with smilax, while Ann and Peter and Daniel Lunt dined inconspicuously before the drawing-room fire.

"How extraordinary youth is!" Ann exclaimed, as she gratefully ate her hot soup. "Those children are as fresh as if their day had just begun. I suppose they will dance until morning, while I am a wreck already!"

"You'll have to look it more than you do, to be convincing."

She smiled at Lunt, gratefully. "I don't see how English women stand their pace. If we may believe the novelists, the oldest and feeblest dowagers stay up all night every night sitting about chilly ballrooms, producing epigrams. . . . Now I couldn't possibly produce an epigram after eleven o'clock,—and if I did, there wouldn't be an adult man in Chicago wide enough awake to appreciate it!"

"I am going to bed presently," Peter put in doggedly.

"Peter! You only have one daughter; you must stay up until her party is over!"

"I have to take the seven o'clock train to-morrow morning, remember."

"Miss it for once, and see what happens!"

"I'll leave that to Hendricks. He has been late every day for two months."

Ann's face clouded. "I know. . . . He hates the furnace."

"He has to begin at the beginning, as I did."

"He can't quite do that, Pete," Daniel Lunt interposed. "At his age you never took off your dress suit to put on your overalls, as I suspect Hendricks does a good part of the time."

"He should stop all this gadding. He is almost twenty-five years old."

"I think he may be in love with Lily Singer," Ann interposed.

"Would that please you?" Lunt asked.

Ann sighed. "It should, if I am a reasonable woman. Lily is a sweet girl, and she is very pretty."

"I don't want him marrying the daughter of a bank president," the steel maker said, frowning. "The first thing we know he'll be getting a notion of being a banker himself."

"Couldn't Peets carry on the steel business?"

Peter, Sr., put down his glass, and eyed his friend steadily. "Peets? I don't know anything about the boy! His mother would have it that he should go to college, and after keeping Hendricks home, I gave in. . . . What is he doing at Harvard? . . . Not studying, that's evident. As far as I can see, he takes a course or two as a special student, and sits around a club most of the time. He'd be better at work."

His mother put in defensively, "He must be learning something."

"Well, he is not learning the fundamentals of the steel business! . . . Dan, sometimes I think that the only one of my lot who can ever run the Smith and Jefferson plant after me is the little lad up-stairs!"

"My namesake?"

"Yes. . . . He's a clever one. If his mother doesn't ruin him taking him to concerts and reading poetry to him, he'll be a man some day!"

"I shouldn't say that the poetry had injured him. The last time I saw him, he was pitching into a mick twice his size and giving him what for because he called him a red-head!"

Ann put down her coffee cup. "Peter is right: Dannie can do anything," she said, strong pride in her voice. "As for the steel business. . . . Sometimes I think it is a great pity that Annabel wasn't a boy!"

The débutante came up to them at that moment, fresh, and young, and excited. "See my new ring, Uncle Dan." She held out a capable hand, decorated by a turquoise surrounded by diamonds. "Papa gave it to me. It's lovely, isn't it?"

"Very. Are you having a good time, Annabel?"

"Oh, splendid! We are going to have a 'German,' you know. Did mama tell you that her friend Mrs. Jefferson ordered the favors in Paris?"

Peter scowled at that, and Ann blushed, but Lunt said dryly, "No, she didn't tell me that. . . . I am sure they will be extremely fashionable."

"Wait until you see them!"

Out in the picture gallery Johnny Hand's musicians began to tune up, and Daniel relieved the tension by beginning to declaim dramatically, "'There was a sound of revelry by night!'"

Annabel started nervously. She felt certain that her Uncle Dan was capable of keeping her standing there while he repeated the whole poem, which she thought that she remembered was a long one. She said hastily, "I have joined a Browning class, Uncle Dan. Miss Blunt, the English teacher in the Dearborn Seminary, reads us his poems, and explains them."

Lunt looked down at her with a quizzical fondness which he reserved for her. "Charming!" he said. "Explains him, does she? By jove, I wish I could hear her!"

"I'm sure you would find she makes him clearer."

"I have no doubt. . . . But listen, my child! *The Beautiful Blue Danube!*"

"I must run. I have this dance engaged!" She held out her program, covered with scrawled names and initials. "I have nineteen extras taken," she said contentedly.

"Darling, we can't possibly get in more than ten!"

"I know, mother,—but it is nice to have them gone, just the same!" A hovering youth appeared in the doorway, and the girl waved her hand at him, reassuringly. She met him half-way, as he advanced to claim her.

More young people began to arrive,—girls in batches of three or four, and men singly or in pairs.

There was a great deal of rushing about to fill dance programs, pencils in white gloved hands.

"I am a little worried about this party," Ann confessed. "We haven't girls enough, I am afraid: there must be a half-dozen extra men. . . . However, Jimmie Loomis is going to lead the German, and I am told that he is better at it than any one in the world! Annabel is quite humble about having secured any one so grand."

Peter did not carry out his threat of going to bed, but he did retire to his study, where a snooze was possible, even on this thoroughly upsetting night. His wife and Daniel Lunt went out to the picture gallery, and for some time sat watching the young people dance. It was a pretty sight. The room was filled with slim-waisted girls wearing flowing, fluffy skirts which, with one dangling arm encased in a long kid glove, they held up over a multitude of petticoats.

"I wish you would waltz with me," Daniel said to his hostess.

"Oh, my dear,—that is a very bad idea! No one ever heard of a waltzing mama! Not but what I am dying to, of course. Music still makes me a little mad,—but not mad enough for that! . . . I wish I dared to take you out into the conservatory. It is delightful there,—much cooler,—and I am sure I need pink-shaded lights more than these children do,—but Annabel would think it fearfully improper of me."

"I walked through there a while ago, and saw Hendricks and his Lily, sitting very cozily under a potted palm."

"They have been in there for a good half-hour! . . . Dan, if I were a man I should never fall in love with a Lily! . . . With the world before me!" . . . She sighed, lightly. "Annabel is having a beautiful time! . . . Lots of partners to-night, but she has one terrible drawback; she can not flirt! I have to restrain

myself from giving her the most venal advice. I never saw any one so much in need of a bad influence!"

"Did you flirt at her age?"

"I think I must have. I was engaged to two men before I married at twenty: I suppose I must have thought I was in love with them. It wasn't until I fell in love with Peter that I knew I hadn't been."

At that moment Jimmie Loomis came hurrying up, important as a waltzing undertaker.

"I think we should begin, Mrs. Smith."

"Begin?" Ann looked at him vaguely.

"Yes. The German."

"Of course! How stupid of me! I suppose it is time."

"Then I shall blow my whistle," the young man said dramatically, and did so, lustily. Instantly the music stopped, and all the other young men hastened to escort the girls to seats, where they deposited them, bowed punctiliously, and rushed off to find their cotillion partners. This done, they retired to pairs of chairs which the more foresighted had reserved earlier in the evening by the simple method of tying them together with a handkerchief. . . . In a remarkably short space of time Jimmie Loomis was alone in the center of the floor.

"He looks like a combination of a floor-walker and a field marshal," Lunt whispered wickedly.

The favors were all Annabel had said of them; the whole big room was gay with tissue paper extravagances. Here and there a girl stuck a rakish hat on her piled-up hair, or wore a gaudy boa about her bare neck, and the more comically inclined young gentlemen were parading their paper helmets and caps. . . . As the German proceeded, a certain laxness pervaded the ball. A man would call "Wait for me!" to some girl not counted out in the figure, and when the whistle sounded, he would rush frantically for a favor, hurling

himself against other young men equally violent. He would then hurry back, sliding half-way across the floor, to seize his prize. . . . The more popular girls had a little crowd of men contesting for them, and it was not until they had made their choice that the disappointed swains began doggedly to look for a substitute whom they could "favor." . . . Jimmie Loomis proved to be a Napoleon,—a Tzar. On his whistle hung the fate of the evening. He whirled the dancers through intricate "baskets" and circles; he led a riotous grand-right-and-left. The floor was strewn with bits of tulle from skirts, and the girls began to look disheveled.

Ann talked to Daniel Lunt in intermittent and inconsequent bursts. "You haven't seen Peter's new Watts, have you? He paid a great price for it, because he thinks it is like me. Of course it isn't. The woman has red hair, but she has a nimbus about her head which isn't in the least like me. . . . I am trying to persuade him to sell his Bouguereau. I do dislike that blatant woman sitting so ridiculously on all those rocks, with that highly respectable Millais beside her! I react to her exactly as Queen Victoria would! . . . Have you ever heard of a French painter called Manet?"

"Isn't he what they call an Impressionist?"

"I don't know, but Peter's man in New York wants him to buy something of his. He sent a photograph of it a day or so ago,—and really, it is too absurd! It is a picture of a boatman and something which I suppose is meant to be a woman; their faces look exactly as if they had been washed over with a sponge before the paint was dry! And behind them is a river made of solid metal, with a crazy town on the other side of it. . . . I can't believe any one really likes that sort of thing, yet Peter's man said that there are critics who take this Manet seriously! He said in his opinion his pictures would prove a good buy."

Lunt laughed. "The advanced school is a long way beyond me! I don't understand it,—but I am afraid to condemn it for fear of writing myself down old-fashioned. . . . Did you like those Indian stories I sent you?"

"By,—what's his name?—Kipling? Very much. I can't see why he isn't well known."

"My bet is that he will be. I think the man can write. . . . Have you seen the last *Academy?*"

"Mercy, no! I've been so busy being a mother this fall that I haven't had any time to be literary."

"I'll bring it around, if I may. Dowson has a poem in it I want to read to you."

"And explain it, like dear Miss Blunt?"

"It is stark enough. It doesn't need explaining."

"Dear Daniel! I should be an uneducated woman without you! . . . Don't you want to go home and go to bed?"

"No. I'll stick it out with you."

Presently other friends came in to share their vigil; there was quite a little group of parents on the platform, and Peter, revived, saw to it that they had champagne and supper. In the dressing-room a forlorn collection of maids yawned and gossiped, and gradually the ball began to break up. One by one, or in groups of three or four, the girls departed, their arms filled with paper wreaths and staffs and streamers. . . . A determined few danced on, and Jimmie Loomis became fairly hysterical in the figures he led them through. They danced furiously, until Johnnie Hand, beaming and regretful, began to play the fatal *Home Sweet Home.* That quieted them; and they danced rhythmically, sentimentally. . . . It was over, and Annabel was rushing up to protest that it was still early.

"Very early," Lunt told her. "It is almost five o'clock."

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When every one was gone, and even the débutante had taken her ecstatic way up-stairs, Ann went into the drawing-room to find Hendricks standing before the dying fire. He looked determined, but a trifle frightened; he made his mother think of him as when, a little boy, he had been naughty.

"My dear, you must go to bed, or you will never make your train."

"I'm not going to take that damned train,—not ever, any more!"

"You know your father dislikes having you late."

"Listen, mother! I'm through with the steel works. . . . To-night I asked Lily to marry me, and she said she would—"

"My dear boy!" Ann put out her hand, moved, and drew Hendricks down to her so that she could kiss him. He put his arm around her, his defiance melted, and gave her a good hug.

"Wonderful, isn't it? She thinks I am right about business, too. I want to go into her father's bank!"

"The Chicago National?"

"Yes. I like banking; it suits me. I spoke to Mr. Singer about it the other day, and he said he thought he could make a place for me."

"I should hope he could,—and the Smith and Jefferson Company banking there!"

"Lily thinks he might like having a son-in-law associated with him. He has no son, you know. . . . And I have money enough of my own to live on, anyway, even if father does act up."

"You should remember that your christening present was only ten thousand dollars, Hendricks. It is your father's cleverness in handling it all these years that has made it a substantial little fortune," his mother reminded him sharply.

"I know," the boy admitted impatiently. "Father is wonderful, of course,—but he can't see a thing beyond the works! He doesn't ever seem to have been young himself."

"When he was your age he had to support himself," Ann reminded him. "This will be a blow to him, Hendricks. He has counted on you. He feels that he needs your support."

"I don't do him any good, sweating at those furnaces. He never lets me take any responsibility. . . . I doubt if Peets will stand it, either."

"My dear, so do I doubt it! It is my great fear. What will your father do if you both desert him?"

"There's Dannie," Hendricks said, dismissing the subject. "You'll tell father, won't you, mother?"

"I hate to."

"Well, he'll take it better from you. You can make him see my point."

"I suppose I can,—but not to-night. He is tired, to-night. To-morrow, Hendricks."

Up-stairs, she hesitated in the hall. Already Peter's light was out; the door of her room stood open, invitingly. Inside there was a soft glow from a dying fire. She went past it, and quietly opened the door of Dannie's nursery. . . . She crept in, and felt her way over to his bed. Moonlight came in at the window, and fell across the foot of it, guiding her.

The little boy was lying on his side; she could feel the slight mound of his body under the blankets, and reaching up, she stroked his tumbled hair, softly. It was extraordinary how the feel of him melted her; touching him so, she became all tenderness.

He moved a little, restlessly, and finally turned over on his back. She had grown accustomed to the gloom in the room, and could just make out his face. He opened his eyes, enormous in the dim light. "Mummie," he said contentedly, and reached out a hand languid with sleep to clasp her own.

CHAPTER XXXIII

DAUGHTERS-IN-LAW

Hendricks had his way with less family commotion than Ann had anticipated. Peter had always been able to take his medicine when it was unavoidable, and although he looked older and grimmer after his son's defection, he never complained of it when it was an accepted fact. He even grew attached to his prospective daughter-in-law, who was a sweetly feminine little thing, entirely subservient to her men. She hadn't an opinion about anything, and on the whole, Peter preferred women so. His mother said, sighing, that Hendricks would be spoiled, but his father said, laughing, that he would undoubtedly enjoy it.

He was, as a matter of fact, supremely contented. He not only basked pleasantly in Lily's unquestioning affection, but he found his work entirely congenial. He liked the leisurely banking hours, and after years in the mill, he took great pleasure merely in wearing the correct clothes which were expected of a man of his position in a bank. He became deeply interested in questions of credit, and exchange, and discount, and he rapidly developed into a passionate conservative. Mr. Singer was delighted with him, and assured his mother that in his opinion Hendricks would be a great banker, —as great, possibly, as his own departed predecessor, Josephus Baker.

As great as Josephus Baker! Had her first born,

for whom she had dreamed so many young dreams of success, sunk to that? Would he, too, be spoken of as "cautious," and—"safe"? She thought of her husband, involved always in the conflict of life, and she believed that she regretted even more than he the fact that his lusty business had proved too rough for their son.

When Peets came home at Christmas time, she insisted on discussing with him his plans for the future, although, as his vacation was short, and as he plunged immediately into gaieties in which Annabel was involved, it took some maneuvering on her part to tie him down to a serious interview.

"What am I going to do when I leave college? Jove, mother,—that is six months off! I have been thinking, though, that next summer I might go abroad with a couple of men I know at Harvard, on a bicycle trip. . . . They tell me that with these new safeties you can go anywhere."

"And after that?"

Peets moved his shoulders restlessly. "How can I tell what I'll do a year ahead?"

"Of course, you will go into your father's works, Peets. Now that your brother has left it, there is nothing else for you to do. One of you boys must learn the steel business."

"I don't see why I should be sacrificed to Hendricks, mother. I'd hate the works, and I would be no good there, I know. . . . I've thought of selling stocks and bonds, myself."

"With a magnificent business like the Smith and Jefferson Company wanting you?"

"Well, I don't want it. . . . You may as well know: I have thought of beginning in New York. That is the place to live if you're going to be a broker."

"I doubt if your father would ever allow it," Ann said firmly, but inwardly she quaked with the realiza-

tion that as a mere parent, she was helpless to determine her son's fate.

She was devoured with wonder as to what her children were thinking about. Their movements she was able to follow with comparative ease, but their minds were a sealed book to her. She knew they liked to believe that this was the case, and that they cherished the conviction that their modernity shocked her. Sometimes, rather than disappoint them, she pretended that it did.

"Annabel!" she would protest, "people will say that you are a new woman!"

"Well, I am," the girl would reply calmly. "I believe in all sorts of new things. . . . I believe that women should have lives of their own, even."

"Mercy!" her mother would cry, looking at her with twinkling eyes, "I hope you don't talk in that strong-minded fashion to those unfortunate young men who come to call on you. They will think you will be wearing bloomers, next!"

She wondered at her children's cock-sureness; she couldn't remember having been like that at their ages. Life had been a thing of mystery to her, which her curiosity drove her to investigate, and she still felt, humbly, that it was by no means as simple as they assumed, for the older she grew, the less she seemed to know about it. She had a good time with her boys and girls: few mothers, she was convinced, laughed with their children as much as she did, but notwithstanding that, her relations with the older ones bore little resemblance to the intimate companionship which she had confidently looked forward to when they were in their enchanting childhood.

Dannie, however, was different; Dannie was a pure delight. In the Christmas vacation, finding the other members of her family provided for, she concentrated on him, and she had never enjoyed the holidays more.

Gilbert and Sullivan were then conquering Chicago, and she took him to a performance of *Mikado.* He adored it as she did, and he seemed to her to have a curiously adult appreciation of it, as he sat beside her, shouting with gay childish laughter, and applauding until he was red in the face. Ann bought the score, and sang the songs to him at home. In no time at all he learned them, too, and strutted about the house, singing them in his clear boy's soprano.

In Christmas week he went to the theater at night for the first time in his life, to see Peter's favorite actress, Rosina Vokes, in *The Circus Rider.* It amazed and delighted him to have his stern father unbend sufficiently to chuckle with him intimately; he found it almost as exciting as coming out of the theater to see all the shining lights making dazzling paths on the snow.

"What fun we have, don't we?" he demanded of his parents, snuggled down between them on the broad carriage seat.

One day he went with his mother to see the Smith and Jefferson works. It was a long time since Ann had been there, and she was almost as thrilled as the little boy, as she watched the great spectacle of the Bessemer converter. Peter was beginning to make open-hearth steel, also, but Dannie vastly preferred the more spectacular earlier process. He was enchanted with everything he saw, and explored the great place tirelessly. Even his father's gloomy foreign laborers, sullen from a fruitless strike in the previous year, looked at the eager, red-headed little boy with friendly grins, and talked to him, whenever they had an opportunity, in fragmentary English.

Peter was delighted at Dannie's enthusiasm. "He'll be a steel man!" he declared, and, somewhat to her own amazement, this prophecy did not daunt Ann. Standing in the midst of her husband's works, her ears

assaulted by the clangorous uproar of machinery, her eyes enchanted by the brilliant shower of sparks from a converter blowing off, she felt that steel-making was a strong man's job.

She thought it was possibly because of their visit that Peter let his second son have his way. "You'll get sick of selling shares of stock in things other men make," he told Peets contemptuously. "When you do, come back and let Dannie give you a job."

2

Lily was a perfect bride,—all downcast eyes, white tulle and blushes. Annabel was maid of honor, Peets came home from Harvard to be best man, and there were eight fluttering bridesmaids in pale green *mousseline de soie,* who carried white carnations. It was, every one said, "a sweet wedding," and the evening reception at the banker's house was most elaborate. The stairway was banked with palms and ferns, and the bride and groom received under a canopy of lilies and violets.

Ann felt that she had very little to do with the whole affair. Beyond buying a Kirk silver tea service for the bride, and assisting Hendricks in his search for a pearl brooch in the design of a lily-of-the-valley, she had no responsibilities further than selecting a discreet costume for the mother of the groom. She wore green surah, with great puffed sleeves of light brocade, and three diamond stars in the front of the "French twist" in which she wore her hair.

"It would be more seemly of me if I were beginning to turn gray," she told Peter. Her hair was somewhat darker than it had been, but there was not a white thread in it.

The bride and groom went to Washington on their honeymoon, and Peets returned to Cambridge. In June

he sailed for Europe, as he had planned, and, later in the summer Peter took a party of Annabel's friends to Colorado in one of the private cars which were always at his disposal. . . . Time fled with its appalling speed, although there was nothing in particular to mark its passage. Autumn arrived on the very heels of spring; it was Annabel's second season, and she took on more serious interests. She joined a china-painting class, and taught sewing, which she did rather badly, at the church mission. She had plenty of attention, but so far as her mother could tell, no lovers. It seemed strange to Ann, whose girlhood had been a series of amorous climaxes, but her daughter seemed supremely content to drift along a primrose path on which no flowers came to fruition.

Peets came home from Europe, and by the simple process of never getting on a train, he succeeded in remaining in New York until Christmas time, when he turned up with the announcement that he had affiliated himself with a stock broker's firm in that city, and that he found the work thoroughly congenial.

His father was enraged with him, and Christmas would have been a miserable event had not Lily presented Hendricks with a son on Christmas Eve. There was something irresistible about that: Peter, always ready to be optimistic, found that his hope for the future flared again, and Ann was almost as delighted with the new addition as she had been with his father, twenty-five years before. She had none of the disagreeable sensations to which she had looked forward on becoming a grandmother, and Hendricks was, of course, everything that a new and beaming parent should be. He gave the conventional impression of a man who, out of the entire citizenry of the world, was alone experiencing the thrills of parenthood.

"What will you call him?" Ann asked, unwisely, at the family Christmas dinner. She couldn't wait, she

did so hope that Peter was going to have the satisfaction of a namesake.

Hendricks sat back a little and smiled expansively. "Lily will have it that there should be another H. C."

"H. C.!" This was what the distinguished and aristocratic name of Hendricks Cortlandt had been reduced to! H. C. Smith, the promising banker.—Heavens, what life did to one! Ann looked at her elder son,—comfortable, already a trifle too fat and considerably too sleek, and wondered what she might have done in his impressionable childhood to have developed in him the quality of originality he so lacked. Her glance went from him to Dannie; the boy was grinning at her openly, and as their eyes met, he winked, solemnly. His mother could see that he divined what had been passing through her mind, and she laughed with him at being found out.

When Peets returned to New York after the holidays his mother went with him, as she wanted to see for herself what sort of people he had fallen among. He was living at a hotel, which seemed to her dreary, but as he assured her that he was up for membership at a club where he hoped later to live, she assumed that it was only a temporary arrangement. She found it rather difficult to meet his friends, as his idea of making the most of her visit to New York seemed to consist in eating dinner with her alone at Delmonico's, and going with her later to the theater. They saw the beautiful young Lillian Russell, with whom Peets was greatly enamored, and they went several times to see Ada Rehan in stock. Ann spoke of looking up her New York connections, in order to provide Peets with a possible haven for an occasional Sunday dinner, but he was disposed to be scornful of them, and she began to understand that her son considered her,—affectionately perhaps, but definitely,—a back number.

It was not until Daniel Lunt unexpectedly turned

up in New York that she really felt her visit had accomplished anything. He took her down to Peets' office, where he introduced her to members of the firm who were flatteringly glad to see her, and spoke to her with great enthusiasm of her husband's prowess as a steel man. She was human enough to be delighted to have Peets witness this little triumph, and she felt that her relations with him were vastly improved by it.

Heartened, too, by Daniel Lunt's encouraging advice, she did finally look up Mrs. Hendricks Rensselaer, who had been Fanny Cortlandt, and her most intimate friend throughout her girlhood. She was delighted to see Ann, and cried a great deal during their initial interview; she cried easily, with emotional heavings of a plump bosom. There was little left in her appearance to remind Ann of the timid and exquisite girl of eighteen, whom she had last seen. Somehow, experience had used Fanny badly. Her face had been a fair page on which the vexations of life had been written, and Ann thought, looking at her with the most tender affection, that tragedy might have been more becoming. She had become a petty and fussy woman, devoted to society in its more restricted sense, and to her husband and daughters. Her friend could see that she envied her her sons, which she thought natural enough, and that she was by no means without wistfulness when she talked of the success of Peter's business. Four daughters to maintain in New York and Newport had been, she gathered, no trivial expense. Only the second one had married, and she not too brilliantly.

"My son-in-law is a nice fellow," Fanny told her. "He comes from a good family, but he has his way to make. Of course, girls have no sense."

"You said that same thing about me," Ann assented cheerfully. "You remember how horror-struck the family was when I married Peter."

Into Fanny's childlike gaze came a decided measure of condemnation. "I should say we were," she said sternly. She leaned closer to Ann across the chasm of the years. "Tell me, my dear, was it terribly hard at first?" she asked, in fascinated curiosity.

Ann laughed. "I have never been so happy in my life! If I could go back to it,—back to those years when we lived in a cold little shanty of a cottage, and Peter came home every night and told me all about everything that had happened during the day, I would do it in a minute." She stood up with a touch of the extravagant buoyancy which had characterized her youth. "Why, Fanny, it has made my whole life worth-while!"

3

Peets and his mother went to the Rensselaers' for noonday dinner on Sunday, and in the morning Ann went to service at Grace Church, as she used to do when she had lived in New York. At first she found herself greatly touched by the unchanged look of the place, which brought vividly back to her the memories of her childhood. She looked about her in discreet curiosity at the congregation, hoping to find old friends masquerading in the disguise of middle age, but she was unable to identify any one. . . . The women all looked alike to her, and they gave a westerner an impression of not having lived. Looking at them and savoring their sheltered quality, Ann had no regrets at having bolted the life which had shaped them.

She went back to the hotel to collect Peets, and to change her gown. She looked very smart indeed, and ridiculously young, when she finally set forth with her tall son. "I do think, Peets," she confided to him, as she frankly studied her reflection in the glass in the elevator, "that no one would believe I am a grand-

mother. . . . Of course, I love being one, but I should hate to look it."

Fanny was very glad to see them. She had impressed Ann as being somewhat nervous when she had invited them to come, but Peets plainly reassured her. He was an extremely personable young man, and his mother could see that the two pretty girls, one not yet out, and the other, she should judge, a year or two older than her son,—looked at him with demure interest.

Hendricks was late. "He is at the club, of course," Fanny said fretfully, but before long he came in.

He, too, was glad to see Peets. "Stock broker, eh?" he said. "You are in a good office, but why didn't you come to me? . . . Ann, you should have sent him to me. What?"

Ann smiled. "Of course, his father and I hope he won't stay," she said. "We want to get him back to Chicago and into the steel business."

"It's a good business," Hendricks said heartily, but Fanny interposed nervously, "It would be hard on him to leave New York, Ann."

The New Yorkers asked the Chicagoans naive questions about their city as dinner proceeded, which Peets answered quite solemnly, while his mother laughed at him. "You must come out and visit us, Fanny," she finally declared. "We are quite a village. I think you would be amused."

Her friend's jaw dropped. "Chicago is so far away," she murmured vaguely. "It would be delightful, of course."

The strangers made a good impression, and as the initial party moved successfully to its close, Fanny offered them further invitations. "There are old friends you must see, Ann," she murmured, "and people your son should meet."

4

Peets thought better of his mother after his introduction to the Rensselaer family: not since he was a little boy had he treated her with so much respect, and Ann could not help receiving it with her tongue in her cheek. It was evident that Peets was dazzled by social position, and it struck her as an odd turn of fate that she should have a son like that. Certainly, he got it neither from her nor from her sturdy husband, and she decided that New York was a bad place for him, but she could not shake his determination to remain there. Her friends were disposed to make much of him. Hendricks Rensselaer saw to it that he was at once elected a member of the most desirable young men's club in the city and Fanny was continually inviting him to gaieties in which her elder daughter, Emily, was involved. The girl was twenty-five years old, and Peets was only twenty-three; but Ann wondered now and then if it were possible that anything of a serious nature were brewing. While she had nothing definite against the girl, she found that she did not like her very well. She reminded her of Hendricks' mother, who had been a great belle and beauty, and whom Ann remembered as being extremely affable abroad, and extremely sharp at home. She had Mrs. Rensselaer's lovely, discontented face, and her air of listless superiority.

"She's a fool," Ann said to herself impatiently. "Anybody is a fool who cuts herself off from life like that!" But Emily was not a fool: she was, in matters which concerned her own advantage, an extremely clever woman,—quite clever enough, should the position seem desirable to her, to install herself as Ann's daughter-in-law. Nothing definite, however, had happened up to the time Ann left for home, and she was able to say to herself that undoubtedly she was unnecessarily alarmed.

The thing that impressed her most on her return was an unexpected appreciation of the fact that Peter looked old. She had not realized, seeing him every day, how grizzled he had become, nor how tired his eyes looked. For a time after her return she held fruitlessly before him the lure of foreign travel, and she irritated him excessively by begging him not to work so hard.

"Do you want to make an old man of me?" He would storm impatiently, in return.

Ann observed, too, with the fresh impressionability of one who has had a vacation, that Peter was becoming irritable. He was very sharp with Hendricks, and as a result, the boy came less often to the house, at which his father complained, unreasonably. Peets he seldom mentioned except on the day on which he sent him his monthly check, when he was wont to speak bitterly of him to his mother.

Ann seldom heard from her second son. She found it hard to reconcile herself to losing touch with him,—to abandon him to a life which was not contained in her own, but experience had made her philosophical; she wrote him regularly twice a week and concealed the fact that she found his answers both brief and irregular.

In the spring after her visit to New York, however, he wrote her a letter which was more revealing than anything she had had from him for some time.

"Dear Mother:

"I should have written you before but I have been very busy at the office. Railroad stocks have been active and work has piled up.

"I have had a raise in my pay which I know will please you but perhaps you had better not tell father as it is a small one, and he might get the idea that he could cut my allowance if he knew I had it.

"There is something I wish you would do for me.

You know I go to the Rensselaers' often. Mrs. R. has been very good to me ever since you were in New York and through her I have made many important and pleasant acquaintances. I wish you would write Emily and ask her to come out and stay with Annabel for a while. Her mother thinks she should see the West and I would like to have you know her better. I don't know what you could do to make her like Chicago after New York, but perhaps if she didn't stay very long it might be all right.

"Your affectionate son,

"Peets."

Ann wrote at once, and after some exchange of letters, it was arranged that Emily should come out to Chicago for a fortnight's stay.

5

Ann drove to the station to meet her guest in her new C-spring victoria. On the box was an English coachman recently engaged by Peter, who drove a pair of hackneys with docked tails. Peter did not impose his preference for long-tailed horses on the women of his family, although he himself continued to drive his trotters at a pace which the more showy animals in his stable could not rival. Ann's turnout was very smart indeed; there was, she was certain, nothing in New York that could eclipse it.

In spite of her sophistication, Emily arrived in a pleasant state of excitement at being so far away from home, and on her way down the station platform with her hostess, she could not refrain from talking with naive astonishment of the wonders of Pullman drawing-room sleepers.

As they drove through the city she regained her poise, however, and dropped an occasional comment. "Fancy tying horses in the streets!" she said. And later, "In New York people are not allowed to use the sidewalks for storage."

Tea was ready at home, and Annabel, waiting to dispense it, looked very charming. Ann could see that the newcomer glanced at the western girl with discreet appraisal, and that Annabel was immediately impressed by her superb manner. She felt that she would like to shake her daughter.

The stranger was entertained with an enthusiasm which amounted almost to violence. Dances and dinners and picnics were given for her, and she was taken with large parties of young people to see Stuart Robson and William H. Crane in *The Henrietta,* and to a performance of *The Lottery of Love,* given by Ada Rehan and John Drew, both of which, as she wearily informed her hostesses, she had seen earlier in the season in New York.

Through all the attention she received she maintained an attitude of polite indifference: the only time the persevering Chicagoans were able to detect enthusiasm in their guest was on Derby Day at Washington Park, where, although the girl murmured languid comparisons to the races at Saratoga Springs, she was plainly impressed. Peter refused to maintain a coach, but Hendricks, the well-to-do young vice-president of the Chicago National, had that year bought a yellow-wheeled Brewster drag and a team of roans which he drove uncertainly, but with good fortune, and on the great day he asked Emily to sit on the box seat with him. She looked very pretty and correct in her light airy dress, with the gay parasol she held over her shoulder framing her arrogant young face, and she stared superciliously at the crowd which thronged the boulevards.

There were four or five other coaches out that day, and a French char-à-banc with leopard skins spread over the seats, as well as several tandems, and numberless standhope phaetons, dog-carts, and victorias with smart rosettes on the bridles of the horses. The

avenue was all one kaleidoscope of movement and color, and over the rapping of hoofs on the white macadam roadway, the notes of coach horns sounded, mellow and exotic on the soft June air.

The club house was very gay; the ladies were all in charming new summer dresses, and the men wore top hats, and had glasses slung across their shoulders. There was a great deal of laughter and flirtation and excitement.

"Why, this is really brilliant!" Emily Rensselaer was heard to say again and again. "Why, this might be New York!"

When her fortnight drew to a close, her father came on to fetch her. He put up for a day or two at the club, where it seemed he had many friends. He was very curious about Chicago and proved to be an indefatigable sight-seer. He allowed Ann to walk him through the galleries of the new Art Institute; he surveyed the machinery in the Exposition Building on the Lake Front Park, and even went with Dannie to see the Battle of Gettysburg panorama, where he delighted the little boy by giving him personal reminiscences of the great days of the war. His main interest, however, was in the industries of the new city, and regardless of the distance from town, he went twice to the Smith and Jefferson works.

To Ann he said, "By jove, you were a smart girl to marry as you did! Your husband is a wonder! He is a world beater! . . . Why don't you get him to move east, now he's made his fortune?"

Ann laughed. "We couldn't either of us leave Chicago," she declared. "I should much rather live here than in New York."

Hendricks Rensselaer laughed. "You'll never make me believe that!" he said easily.

6

After Emily's return, Ann received ecstatic letters from Fannie, and a perfect expression of appreciation from the girl herself. It was evident that the intimacy between the two families had been advanced by the success of the visit, and about a fortnight after the New Yorker's departure, Peets wrote his father and mother that he was engaged to Emily.

CHAPTER XXXIV

SUCCESS

PEETS' New York *ménage* proved from the start to be an expensive proposition. His father increased his son's allowance generously when he married, but six months after the wedding the young couple were hopelessly in debt. Peets was always writing for money. He had taken a cottage at Newport,—a small one, but Newport was expensive. . . . Emily had been there all her life: she couldn't stand the heat in the city in summer. . . . The brokerage business didn't pay him much, as yet. . . . It had been a dull year.

Ann went east to see what could be done.

"Have you been ill?" she demanded sharply when she saw her son. "You look thinner."

"No. . . . I'm perfectly fit. . . . Of course, it has been hot, in the city."

"How often do you get down to Newport?"

"Oh,—week-ends. I generally make the Friday night boat. We'll go down together to-morrow."

"Are you sure it won't inconvenience Emily?"

Peets flushed. "If it does, you can stay at the Rensselaers', " he said. "You know our place is tiny."

"I shall stay at the hotel, of course," Ann told him crisply. "I prefer it, as it leaves me free."

In Newport Emily met them at the pier in a smart new basket phaeton which Peets had neglected to men-

tion as one of his more recent extravagances. "I am sorry we can not put you up," she told her mother-in-law. "You know we felt that we couldn't afford a decent house this season." She looked angelically patient, as well as very pretty, but Ann noticed that she greeted Peets with her cheek. "I am expecting you for luncheon," she added brightly.

"I will come with pleasure," Ann assured her. "I am expiring to see how small a house you can get for so large a rent! Dear me, how this town has changed! It is a hundred years since I have seen it. I used to come here as a child."

The hotel was a vast structure, surrounded by broad wooden piazzas and intersected by echoing corridors. Ann's windows looked to the sea; bright blue and sparkling like a picture ocean, it lay spread before her.

Fanny insisted on carrying Ann off for the morning. She had a basket phaeton, too, not quite so smart nor so shining as her daughter's, and in it the two women drove through the quaint little town and out on the ocean drive. Inevitably they talked of their youth, while Fannie pointed out the changes, and told the visitor what had happened to the people who had once lived in the houses they passed.

"The whole world seems to have died!" Ann declared.

"Well, a good many people have gone away because they couldn't afford to live here any longer, and I am sure I don't wonder. . . . Everything is so fearfully expensive nowadays, and money has become so dreadfully important! Of course, I tell my girls that all these horrid *nouveau riche* people ought not to affect them,—but they do. . . . They affect the whole pace of life! You don't have to think about money, Ann,—but I never seem to get away from it. . . . And now Nellie, with a coming out next year!" She broke off, and sighed disconsolately.

Fanny's house proved to be a comfortable place of the early Hudson River school, perched up on some rocks which commanded a fine view of the ocean. It was small and entirely unpretentious, and in the glitter of new and moneyed Newport, Ann found its air of shabby respectability attractive. There were women everywhere about it. Fanny's two unmarried girls, dressed in striped blazers for their morning tennis, came forward to greet her. Other girls who had dropped in to see them were on the front porch, and the married daughter, with two chubby little children, came down-stairs as Ann entered the house.

"She is spending the month of July with us," Fanny explained. "Her husband can't afford a place in the country. It's very hard on Clarissa." She led her friend out to a piazza which faced the sea. "I hope we can talk here," she said, "but it is difficult, anywhere."

Behind them in the dining-room the younger daughter was being served a belated breakfast: as she ate it, she shouted comments on a dance the night before to her friends on the porch, who, now and then, in their turn, called back requests to her to hurry.

Her sister was playing a popular song on a piano somewhere near by. The familiar melody of *Daisy, Daisy,—Give Me Your Answer, Do!* dominated everything, and fresh young soprano voices sang the words.

> "It won't be a stylish marriage,
> For I can't afford a carriage,
> But you'd look sweet upon the seat
> Of a bicycle built for two!"

The young mother joined the older women on the piazza. "The baby is behaving frightfully with her new German nurse," she sighed. "I must say I am beginning to wonder if advantages are worth the trouble." She looked tired, and there was something

in the discontented droop of her lips which reminded Ann sharply of her daughter-in-law.

Hendricks appeared presently, startlingly masculine among the women of his household. He was like a pasha. "Ann, by jove!" he said, "if I had known you were here, I wouldn't have slept late like this! I wish you had brought Peter with you. Did you come down to have a look at Peets and Emily?"

"Yes," Ann said a little dryly, "I did."

"They seem to me to be getting on perfectly, Ann," Fanny interposed nervously. "Peets is a charming husband. We have all grown so fond of him!"

Hendricks looked rather steadily at the visitor during this outburst, and at its close he ventured, acutely, "I'll bet you came down to see how in hell they manage to spend so much money."

"You've guessed it, Hendricks," Ann said. "Peter won't give Peets more than he agreed to, and the boy is head over heels in debt."

"Oh, my dear," Fanny interposed nervously, "it's this modern life! All the young people are in debt. Everything costs more than any of them can afford, and surely your husband is a very rich man."

"Emily is as extravagant as the devil!" her father admitted with unexpected candor. "No one knows that better than I do. What does your husband want, Ann, to make him loosen up? Would he like to have Peets go into the Smith and Jefferson Company?"

Ann was amazed. She had not looked for anything in the nature of this complete capitulation. "I think he would be very glad to have Peets do that," she admitted. "Naturally, he wants his sons in his own business."

"They are fools to try anything else," Hendricks told her. "I never could understand, with a good thing like that in the family, why Peets wants to mess around selling bonds."

"But, Hendricks," his wife interjected miserably, "that would mean Emily would have to live—in Chicago!"

Her father disposed of this objection easily enough. "Do her good!" he said. "You go home and talk it over with Peter, Ann, and I'll have it out with Emily. It isn't as if she couldn't come on here when she felt like it. Chicago isn't so far away."

"Oh, but, my dear," Fanny mourned, "it isn't New York!"

2

As a result of this conversation, Peets did actually move to Chicago, and gloomily, but with a certain amount of fortitude, he went to work in the Smith and Jefferson Company. His father was delighted, and having learned from his experience with Hendricks not to make the beginning too strenuous, he put his son into the office, where he kept ordinary hours. Peets hated it, but he had learned a certain amount of stoicism, and he made no complaints.

The young people lived for a time in the big house on Prairie Avenue, and at first Emily was, as Annabel said, "all the rage." She was a lovely creature, and her very coldness was an added attraction. People in the warm and friendly town to which she had come waited, fascinated, to see it melt, but as time went on, and she remained triumphantly glacial, they began to lose interest in her. She made no intimate connections, and after six months she called none of the women by their first names.

Although the girl was submissive enough, Ann found her irritating. She did exactly what her mother-in-law asked her to do, but with a complete lack of enthusiasm which made her singularly lifeless. It was as though she made no distinctions between one thing and another in the new city; she had no sanguine

expectations, and no disappointments. Now and then she voiced a criticism of something which seemed to her "odd," and occasionally she dropped a surprised commendation, but for the most part she concealed her reactions in a silence which Ann felt to be Spartan. She wondered if Peets escaped so easily: the boy sometimes had a cowed look which enraged her, but in the face of his obvious devotion to his wife she could say nothing. Hendricks and Lily frankly disliked the newcomer, and at the end of a fortnight Annabel was in rebellion at having her in the house, notwithstanding the fact that in the beginning she had made a great fuss over her. Only Peter remained her champion, and he in a limited sense.

"Let her alone," he advised Ann. "She is as hard as nails,—and hardness is what Peets needs."

When the spring came, Emily announced that she was going to Newport for the summer.

"But, my dear,—isn't this rather sudden?" Ann demanded.

Emily looked at her lucidly. "No. We took a cottage there for five years, you know."

"And how about Peets?"

"He will come on for his vacation."

"Two weeks?"

"If that is all his father will give him."

That ended it. Emily went to Newport, and it was understood that Peets would go on twice during the season, for ten days each time. The family expanded into geniality when she was gone. They had not laughed so much all winter as they did on the night after she left.

Hendricks' wife presented him with twins in July, and Peter, urged on by Ann, announced that he would make him a present of a house. There was much talk as to its location, for the north side was becoming fashionable, but Hendricks insisted that he preferred

the old neighborhood, and Peter picked up a comfortable red brick house in the next block, cheap. When they were settled in it, his mother began looking about for a house for Peets, also. He preferred the north side: there was a house on the Lake Shore Drive which he thought Emily would be satisfied with, and, although it was small, not very convenient, and twice the cost of Hendricks' respectable family mansion, Peter ultimately bought it. Peets spent the greater part of the summer carrying out his wife's instructions as to decorations.

Emily came back in September, and professed herself as pleased. She had shipped her furniture from New York, and she arranged it charmingly in her new house. "It reminds me of home," she confessed, with a sudden blur of tears in her eyes, when Ann congratulated her upon the effect.

Standing on her own feet, she was a more conspicuously lonely figure than she had been when she was a part of Ann's energetic family life. She seldom lunched out, and, while she was very careful to repay social indebtedness, her entertaining was of a strictly formal sort. Her mother-in-law used to wonder what she found to do all day long. Often when she went to see her, she was sitting idly by the window, looking out at the lake.

It became known that she expected a baby in the second spring after her marriage, and Ann's heart warmed toward her, although the discovery that in order to be certain of having a good doctor she was going back to New York for the event, strained the family tie somewhat. She went east in early April; the baby, a girl, was born in May, and by the time Emily was about again it was almost summer, and not worth while to come back to Chicago before going to Newport. Peets spent May in New York, and went east again in June to attend to his family migration.

In July the baby was christened, and he went on for a week: in August he took his regular vacation, and in September he told his father that as his wife was still frail, he thought he should bring her west, which meant another trip.

"Does father find Peets valuable?" Hendricks asked his mother, a twinkle in his eye.

"My dear,—he doesn't find him at all!" she returned, and immediately felt guilty at betraying her feelings about one child to another.

If the move to Chicago had been undertaken in the interests of economy it was a distinct failure, for Peets became more of a luxury than ever. His salary was nominal, but on his arrival his father had agreed to pay him a satisfactory allowance. The details were left vague and continued to remain so, for whatever amount of money Peets secured proved to be insufficient. At the end of two years Ann had no idea what Peter gave him, and Peter did not know whether or not the boy's mother was helping him out. The weak spot in their own relations, their absolute inability to discuss anything dispassionately and openly, prevented either one from asking a plain question about the matter, and Peets was the gainer. He got money from them both, although what his mother gave him was unimportant.

3

"Rats, you terrier, mice, you pup!
Come out in the alley, and I'll do you up!"

Dannie's shrill voice rang through the house, and his mother sighed as she rose from her book, and went to call down the stairway, "Dannie!" It was the voice of doom.

"Yes'm!" came the innocent response.

"You come up here!"

The little boy came up the broad stairs very slowly. "Did you want me?"

"You know very well I want you! How can you shout that horrid thing just outside the drawing-room door when Annabel is having a caller?"

"Well,—it's Mr. Loomis."

"What difference does that make?"

"Well,—I don't like him. . . . I don't want to have him for a brother-in-law. He'd be worse than Sister Em."

Ann shrank visibly at that. "What makes you think he may be your brother-in-law?" she basely demanded.

"Well,—he calls me 'my little man!' . . . An' Annabel's awful cross if I hang around when he's here. . . . An' he comes two evenings a week."

Ann rallied. "If that's all," she said, "you are a very silly boy, Dannie,—and much too old for such nonsense."

"I'm ten. I'm old enough for one of those safety bicycles."

His mother's heart contracted. "Oh, Dannie,—how mean you are to grow up!" she exclaimed. "In no time at all, I won't have any little boy."

"Well,—but listen, mom,—can't I have a safety?"

4

She couldn't tell about Annabel. Jimmie Loomis was certainly very devoted, but beyond his unquestioned supremacy as a leader of "Germans" he seemed to her to be a singularly featureless young man. She wondered what he and her daughter talked about. . . . She doubted if he were interested in the girl's club at Hull House, or in her sewing class at the Episcopal mission. . . . It did not occur to her that Jimmy Loomis talked to Annabel about herself, although she

did observe that the child was looking prettier than she ever had before.

Peter was away from home much of the time now, on mysterious trips into upper Minnesota. Sometimes he took Daniel Lunt with him, but more often he went with a group of other iron men. . . . He kept his own counsel in regard to what they did, and his mouth took on its old tight look when any member of his family asked injudicious questions. Ann never ventured any, for life had not taught her sufficient philosophy to remain indifferent when he refused to answer. It was a risk she never ran.

She was surrounded by a conspiracy of silence. . . . Peter was reverting to type; Peets was sunk in defensive uncommunicativeness: Annabel was self-consciously secretive; Hendricks was all banker, and even Daniel Lunt told her nothing. She hated it. She said to herself that she hated it as much as she had years ago, when she had left Peter, with a half-mind never to return. . . . When she recalled that summer, however, she knew that never again could she achieve such rebellion. . . . Never again could she achieve a tenor, either, she admitted cynically. . . . That sort of thing was over for her,—happily or unhappily.

5

It was not long after Ann's conversation with Dannie that Jimmie Loomis sought Peter out at the Smith and Jefferson works, and tremblingly summoned courage to demand the hand of his daughter.

The steel king looked at him with frowning intensity. He could have broken the youth before him between his fingers. . . . He could have fed him, like scrap, into one of his hungry furnaces, and enjoyed doing it, too. . . . He longed to send him packing, but he said. "What makes you think Annabel wants to marry you?"

"She says so, sir."

"Hum. . . . Girls never know their own minds! What do you propose to support her on?"

Jimmie Loomis summoned spirit to meet this query. "My salary."

"What are you making?"

"Four thousand a year, sir. . . . Of course I know she has been used to more—"

"Four thousand isn't to be despised. Earn that, do you?"

"Yes, sir. In the wooden ware business."

Peter looked at the aspirant with more kindly eyes: after all, he was making a fair showing. "I'll have to talk to my wife," he said, and added, as an afterthought, "And Annabel, too."

When he reached home he found that Ann knew all about it. "How long has this been going on?" he demanded harshly.

"I don't know, Peter. Annabel has known him ever since she came out. . . . Lately he has been coming here oftener, of course."

"You women run these things. Why didn't you take the girl away?"

"I didn't realize it was serious. . . . No mother does, until it is too late. Annabel only told me this morning. . . . She is very much in love, Peter."

He sniffed. "In love! What does that amount to? If she doesn't get this one, she will fall in love with some one else, all right."

Ann was extraordinarily hurt. "Peter!" she exclaimed protestingly.

A realization of what he had said came over him. "I didn't mean that, Annie," he faltered, and he went over to her, blunderingly. "You and I. . . . We were different." He put his arm around her clumsily. "If I thought Annabel cared like that!" . . .

Ann kissed him, as he drew her close to him.

"She does, I am afraid."

"If that's the case, I reckon you'd better tell her she can have him," Peter pronounced ruefully. "It isn't as if I wouldn't leave enough to take care of her. It looks as if this business I've had in Minnesota would amount to something big. . . . I've gone into iron mines there,—the Missabe range, they call it. . . . I guess Annabel can afford her Jimmie Loomis, if that's what she really wants. . . . If the thing turns out half as well as it promises, I'll be worth ten or twenty times what I was."

Ann drew a long breath. "Oh, Peter,—I hope Emily doesn't hear about it!" she said.

CHAPTER XXXV

THE BREATHLESS YEARS

THE year of the World's Fair was a strenuous one for Ann, who, in common with all good Chicagoans, was absorbed in helping on the great event which was intended to demonstrate to the world at large the unique attraction of her city. She became a member of the Board of Lady Managers, and found her life suddenly involved with energetic "club women" from all over the country. She belonged to what women's clubs there were in Chicago, as a matter of course, but she took them sedately, and looked upon them mainly as avenues down which a fugitive thing called "culture" was hunted in feminine packs. The year she joined "The Fortnightly" she wrote a paper on *The Art of Greece*, but her main contribution to club life had been in providing little cakes and sandwiches. She was an ideal member of a social committee.

The women who wrote her letters from Texas and Massachusetts and the Dakotas took their club life with extraordinary seriousness: it was their weapon against all existing evils; Ann had not dreamed there were half so many until she found herself plunged in this official correspondence.

The whole family was involved in preparation for the Fair. Peter was a commissioner, and a heavy contributor to a thousand and one funds. Hendricks was a member of every committee on which a young banker's name should appear, and Peets practically

abandoned the Smith and Jefferson Company in order to serve as a sort of unofficial host for men who came on to Chicago from the East. After the fair opened, the house on Prairie Avenue, which had seemed so large and empty, was full of people all the time. Ann found herself entertaining the most surprising guests. All the Rensselaer family stayed with her as a matter of course, as Emily's house was so small, and her children's friends were continually popping in and out of her guest rooms, but in addition to these, steel men from England came to Peter with letters, and settled down for long visits, and business acquaintances whose names she had never heard were always failing to find rooms in the over-crowded hotels, and being tucked away somewhere in her third floor.

For a time Titus and Susanna entertained the idea of coming over, and there was an interchange of letters in regard to it, but at the last moment they abandoned the trip.

"The ocean is too wide," Susanna wrote. "I know, now, that I shall never cross it again."

Notwithstanding the complications which she had foreseen in having her friends visit in the same town with Daniel Lunt, Ann was sorry that they did not come. She was very eager to see Susanna: she wanted to compare the results of a life of indulgence with her own, and she wanted, too, to find out whether the vast impersonality her days had lately taken on was the result of having young people about her, or merely what one should expect at fifty. She wanted very much to have that question settled.

The city was filled with strangers of more or less note, all of whom showed an entire willingness to be entertained. In the morning Ann never knew how many people she might have for dinner that night, but she provided Nora with an assistant, and refused to worry. As a matter of fact, she enjoyed so thoroughly

disorganized a life, and it was not until Annabel decided upon the last of June as the ideal time to be married that she voiced a faint protest.

"You might just as well have your wedding on the Peristyle, and start off on your honeymoon in a gondola," she told her daughter desperately, but she rose to the occasion. There was nothing else to do.

The marriage was conducted on a scale suitable for the steel king's daughter. There was an evening wedding in church with six bridesmaids,—three of whom were imported from out of town,—and Annabel wore what was heralded as the first court train which ever swept a Chicago aisle, and a string of pearls from her father which entirely eclipsed the groom's modest brooch. Not only all the friendly fashionable set in town came to the reception following the ceremony, but many distinguished foreign visitors, also. They stood about drinking a prodigious amount of champagne, and gave the evening a cosmopolitan air. Even Emily volunteered the opinion that it was a distinguished occasion.

Ann found the whole thing difficult to carry through. She grew closer to Annabel during the weeks before her marriage than she had ever been, and losing her was a real blow. The girl was tremendously in love, and emotion softened her becomingly; she had never before been so attractive. Her mother thought that there was something very touching in the change which took place in her, and she grew to like little Jimmie Loomis, who was responsible for this mysterious flowering. She established delightful relations with him, and Annabel pretended to be jealous of her. Notwithstanding the World's Fair, and the multitude of demands made upon them all, it was a happy and tremulous time.

The summer whirled through like some tremendous, irresistible machine, and autumn came with astonishing

quickness. People began to talk with bated breath of the approaching destruction of the "White City" which had been the Mecca of the civilized world. . . . Chicago Day, chosen to commemorate the tragedy of the fire, came and went, and furnished the astonishing spectacle of sober-minded citizens so bent upon breaking all records of attendance at the Fair on that day, that they went again and again through the entrance gates, buying a new ticket each time. Dannie played truant from school, and contentedly squandered all his birthday money in swelling the total. . . . Gradually the crowds became less, and it was chilly in the great open buildings. . . . And then it was over: the World's Fair was no more.

2

Its close opened a new era for Chicago. The village quality, which until then had characterized the city, disappeared; people became more self-conscious: they tried to be like other people in eastern cities, or in Paris, or London. They cast aside their Eastlake furniture, and bought what they hoped was French, or Italian, or English. The pre-Raphaelite influence suddenly made itself felt: walls were papered in William Morris designs, and no room was too formal to find in it some variety of the chair with the movable back, like an old shoe in a china shop. Old-fashioned prints and engravings were replaced by photographs of Burne-Jones' and Watts' paintings, and ladies wore romantic clothes, which hung strangely lank on them after the crisp outline of the bustle. The more advanced of them subscribed to English magazines. Every really modern woman had *The Yellow Book* on her table,—and read Dante Gabriel Rossetti,—or said she did,—and learned to talk about joy in work, and textures. She went to see Ibsen plays, also, and read Bernard Shaw. There

began to be a perceptible gulf between the tastes of a business man and his wife.

Fashionable life became more competitive, and entertaining more elaborate. People gave dinner parties and luncheons and dances in hotels, instead of exclusively in the home, and more and more they went to the country for the entire summer.

The panic of eighteen ninety-three, and the lean years which followed it, did not greatly injure Peter. His output was curtailed, but he took advantage of slack times to add to his plant, and to pick up other properties which were forced on the market. During this time he doubled his holdings on the Missabe range.

He grew increasingly bitter about labor. It seemed to him that he was always involved in an altercation with the men he employed and when, in the summer following the World's Fair, the President sent Federal troops to suppress railroad rioting in Chicago he professed himself delighted at the spectacle of the encampment on the Lake Front Park, with cannon ready to use.

"It would do them good to have a lesson," he declared, and became enraged with Annabel when she tried to urge the men's side of the controversy.

"It's working at Hull House that makes you talk like that! I hope Jimmie puts a stop to your going there!"

The old men at the plant, the ones with whom Peter had worked with his hands, were in an overwhelming minority. He felt that he was surrounded by people who hated him, and he made no effort to understand them, nor to make them realize his problems. He became a hard boss, and few of his employees would have believed the tale of his earlier relations with his hands, had they heard it.

He grimly did what he conceived to be his duty toward them. He built a hospital in the neighborhood

of the plant, and he became a large contributor to technical schools. The more he tried to work with Peets, the less he thought of an academic education, but while nothing much was said about it at home, Dannie was planning to go to Harvard. As Peter became harder toward his labor he became softer toward his children; to an entirely unreasonable extent he wanted them to be happy, and he found the simplest way to make them happy was to give them what they wanted. This seemed fair enough, for he could not forget that they were giving him what had come to be the most important thing in his life,—his grandchildren. There was a steadily increasing flock of them: each separate family had a little Peter, and their grandfather used to boast about his namesakes on the rare occasions when he managed to get to the Chicago Club for lunch.

The bicycle craze came and went, and the horseless carriage began to be discussed as a serious possibility. Peets was a great enthusiast for the latter form of sport. He bought an early one-cylinder Winton, and spent most of his time being stalled in the parks, or in leaping gallantly out in order to lead terrified horses past his machine. He was responsible for an appalling number of runaways on the city streets. His mother used occasionally to drive with him, largely because his wife would not do so, but she did not enjoy her pioneer experiences in early motor locomotion. The wind, blowing fiercely in at the open front of the car, whipped and tore at her violently, and she was plastered with mud from the unguarded front wheels. Even the excitement of running twenty miles an hour did not compensate her for such extreme discomfort, but as time went on more and more cars were seen on the streets, and all the young people in her family became enthusiastic about them.

Her younger son continued to be the delightful thing in his mother's life. The charm which he had as

a child was intensified in his adolescence; he was a handsome boy, with gray eyes like his mother's and reddish brown hair which curled in spite of his strenuous efforts to suppress it. He had a great deal of humor and gaiety; one thought of him always as laughing, and yet he took a sufficiently serious interest in life to do well in his studies, and to pursue an extraordinary number of outside tastes. He was fond of music, and played the piano with fluency and some charm, although, as no one had ever succeeded in persuading him to practise, he played entirely by ear. He had a pleasant, unimportant gift for drawing, also, and a knack of getting a likeness. He made rapid little caricatures of people which were really funny but which the boy refused to take seriously.

"They're just imitations of Aubrey Beardsley," he would say, when people complimented him upon them.

The one thing which Ann found wrong with him was that he was not very robust, but as he was never ill, she assumed that he would grow into the insolent health which characterized his brothers and sister.

"He reads too much," Peter said, and dismissed anxiety with that simple formula.

CHAPTER XXXVI

ANN'S TRAGEDY

THE war with Spain broke harshly into the pleasant and prosperous life of the nineties. To Ann it brought sharply back the beginning of the Civil War. She remembered the firing upon Fort Sumter as if it were yesterday, and her heart sank with the realization of what fighting might mean. She could not share the violent enthusiasm of her children, and she seemed to them culpably peace-loving.

"People will say that you are unpatriotic!" Annabel told her severely.

Peets enlisted in the State Militia, and over night he sprang into family prominence. He got no nearer the war than a Southern Camp, however, where he picked up swamp fever and came much nearer dying than his mother ever realized. He was invalided home in July, and he spent a wonderful summer reclining on Newport piazzas, being ministered to by admiring ladies.

His father and mother brought him from the South in a private car, and Ann did not leave him until she was convinced that he was well on the road to recovery, which meant that she was away for a month. Owing to the war she had made no plans for the summer that year, and when she left Chicago she sent Dannie out to stay with his sister in Lake Forest. He met her at the station when she returned, and she thought that he was looking badly.

"It's nothing," he said impatiently. "I've had a

cold for the last week,—that's all. I'll be all right now you are home, moms."

His cheek felt hot and dry when she kissed him, and his hand was hot too. "I believe you have a fever," she said sharply.

"Oh, I am all right. How's Peets? Gee! I'd like to see him!"

The August day was extremely warm, but Dannie was shivering when he reached the house. "I'm all right," he kept saying unconvincingly, but after a little urging he allowed his mother to put him to bed. She tucked him up as she used to do when he was a little boy. Against the white pillow his face looked flushed and unnatural, and thoroughly alarmed now, Ann telephoned for the doctor. While she waited for him to come she hunted up a thermometer and took Dannie's temperature.—One hundred and three. How stupid Annabel had been to allow him to get in this condition! She sat beside his bed and talked to him about his brother, and his little niece and nephew, in Newport,—about anything that would keep him quiet. He lay contentedly enough with happy eyes fixed on her. He was enormously glad to have her back.

When Doctor Clark came he was comfortably reassuring. "You've got a bad bronchial cold, my boy," he said cheerfully. "You'll have to stay where you are for a few days, and take care of it." He left a prescription for a cough medicine, and something to reduce the fever, which was higher by the time he reached the house. "I'll be around in the morning," he told Ann. "He'll be all right if he stays in bed."

Ann spent the rest of the afternoon reading aloud. *Huckleberry Finn* was the boy's choice, and he laughed over it until a paroxysm of coughing shook him.

"Does that hurt?" his mother asked anxiously.

"No, it's nothing," he returned. "Gee, mother, I've only got a cold!"

He fell into a heavy sleep about nine o'clock, but Ann was not satisfied to leave him, and twice during the night she went in to make sure that he was comfortable. He was asleep both times, breathing more noisily than was his custom. In the morning he seemed brighter, and Peter went off to the works as usual, but his mother continued to be uneasy. She could not understand why the boy should look so ill: his eyes were sunken and unnaturally bright, and he continued to run a fever. It was as high in the morning as it had been the afternoon before. When the doctor came he was a little less offhand in his optimism. He took out his stethoscope, and frowned as he listened to Dannie's breathing.

"I think I'll send up a nurse," he said to Ann. "I don't just like the way he looks."

"I don't either," Ann told him. "But what is it? What is the matter with him?"

"Nothing yet. But he might possibly develop a touch of pneumonia. The fever doesn't seem to break."

"Pneumonia!" The dread word clutched Ann's heart like an icy hand, but in a moment she rallied. "Of course send a nurse," she said, "and if there is anything in the world you want, don't hesitate to get it."

An hour after the doctor left the nurse came, and in her starched presence Dannie at once seemed more ill. Ann telephoned for Peter, and he came in looking grave and upset. The bad news also reached Hendricks at the bank, and he drove down to the house at once, full of specious, empty good cheer which his mother found difficult to bear. He would act just like that, she thought, if he believed that Dannie really was dangerously ill. She would not admit that, although by night the boy's temperature was ominously higher than it had been the day before, and it was admitted that he had pneumonia.

Doctor Clark added a second nurse, but when she came on duty at night Dannie apparently did not observe that there had been a change. He lay very still in bed, and his eyes had a queer glassy look. After Doctor Clark's second visit, he returned with another doctor, and they held a consultation. They shut Ann out from the sick-room, but when they emerged from it she observed that they both looked very grave. They made almost no attempt at professional reassurance.

On the third day of Dannie's illness, all the family gathered in the house. They were not allowed to see him, but they hung about anxiously, and Peter, for the first time any of his family could remember, stayed at home from business and spent the day sitting stoically in a chair in the library, smoking cigar after cigar, and talking doggedly to Hendricks about the war situation.

Daniel Lunt came down in the afternoon, and was allowed to go up to the sick-room for a moment, to look in at Dannie from the doorway. Seeing him standing there, Ann went out to speak to him.

"My dear!" he said. "My dear!"

Fear shook her as she met her friend's somber gaze. She trembled, when Lunt took her hand. "He isn't as ill as that!" she protested. "There is no danger, Dan." It was the first time she had spoken that dreaded word, and as it fell from her lips she knew that it was false. She hurried back to Dannie, sick at heart.

Lunt went down-stairs, where he, too, talked of the war with Peter, and wondered if it could be possible that his namesake's family did not realize how ill he was. When the doctor came in, he had a word with him alone.

"Practically no chance," Clark said frankly. "Only a miracle can save him."

Dannie's temperature was higher that night. It was

over one hundred five, and he had a bad time breathing. Notwithstanding his fever he was not light-headed, but the only person he appeared to recognize was his mother. She never left him, but sat crouched by his bedside, looking at him as though she could, by the very faithfulness of her watch, keep at bay the thing she dreaded.

He was very weak, and his distressed breathing shook his whole light, boyish frame. He seemed very young to her again, almost a little child. It was meticulously still in the sick-room; there was scarcely a sound except the labored rasp of Dannie's breath. The heat was terrific, and some one fanned him constantly, but he did not seem to notice it. . . . He noticed nothing at all by the third night of his illness, not even his mother, and Ann was persuaded to leave him and snatch a few hours' sleep in her own room next door.

On the fourth morning, the heat broke. There was a sharp thunder and lightning storm, followed by a cool, life-giving breeze from the lake. Every one felt better. Every one was sure that this was the tonic Dannie needed, but inside the sick-room there was little change. The boy continued to lie very still along the edge of his bed, sometimes with his eyes open and fixed on the ceiling, and sometimes closed for interminable moments. His face had grown thinner. There were deep hollows around his eyes, and his young lips looked pinched. He did not speak at all that morning, but confined his efforts to the supreme one of breathing: the cooler air seemed no easier for him than the heat had been. When his mother came up to his bed he looked at her gravely for a moment, and she fancied that there was recognition in his eyes. She did not leave him again through all his long day's struggle, and at five o'clock in the afternoon, when he abandoned it, his hand was clasped in hers. She could feel just the slightest tremor in his fingers when he died.

CHAPTER XXXVII

THE TENOR ROLE

Some six months after Dannie's death, Ann picked up the paper one morning, and observed listlessly that Eduardo Cassinova, a well-known European tenor, who had recently scored a success in New York, would that night make his first Chicago appearance in the opera *Aïda*. Her attention was caught, for *Aïda* would never be to her what other operas were, no matter how many times she heard it, nor how many brilliant singers should pour out for her the golden charm of the tenor solo. Her singularly harmless love affair had been a long time ago, but for her it had for all time invested that particular opera with an especial glamour.

Eduardo Cassinova! All at once the name struck her sharply. Casson's name had been Edward; it was not so different. A faint excitement stirred in her; for the first time in months she felt that she lived. She almost wished that she might see for herself if this famous person, honored by foreign potentates, and the favorite of royalty, could be the young man who had so long ago undertaken her education in the matter of Paris. It seemed highly unlikely, but she came nearer being interested in the possibility than she had been in anything for a long time.

She had not been able to take a real interest in anything since Dannie's death. Her sense of family obligation and a great sympathy for Peter's grief drove

her into simulating it, but to all intents and purposes her vital life had died with her boy. . . . Now it stirred again, faintly. She thought of Casson as she had not in years: he seemed real again, and curiously akin to Dannie. . . . The possibility of going to the opera dawned upon her. She told herself that she could sit in the balcony; that she would not need to meet any one she knew, nor be a part of the gay audience. After entertaining the thought for a while, it began to seem reasonable.

Peter was in Pittsburgh, attending one of those meetings of steel men which might only augment the discord it sought to quiet, or which might, if adroitly managed, lead to harmonious and profitable accord. She was glad that he was away, as she could not imagine sitting cozily in two balcony seats with him. . . . Annabel was out of the question. Ann knew that all of her children would disapprove of her going. . . . She could think of no one who would want to be seated so inconspicuously: her friends were all members of the box set; they either sat in them, or wanted to. As difficulties occurred to her, her determination to go strengthened. . . . Daniel Lunt came into her mind, and she called his office on the telephone,—a modern contrivance which she detested.

"Well, Ann," a cheerful voice said over the wire, "what can I do for you?"

"I want to hear *Aïda*," Ann told him, her voice fluctuating a little as she spoke, for this was the first emergence from the shadow of her grief. "And as Peter is out of town, I thought perhaps you would go with me, if you are free for this evening."

"I am not free," Lunt told her. "But I will be about four minutes after you ring off. I don't propose to miss a chance like this. Will you dine with me beforehand? I have some canvasbacks, and my cook does them very well."

"I'd better not," she said, and her voice over the telephone sounded regretful. "Annabel would be too awfully shocked. You come and dine with me. I am alone: we can have a good talk."

Ann spent an unprecedented amount of time over her toilet, and dressed her hair in the new way, drawn up from her face in a high roll. The gray which had come into it in the last six months showed more plainly than it had in the old close fashion, but on the whole she rather liked the effect. She looked very dignified, she thought, and she told herself, with a humorous little droop of her lips, that dignity should be the aim of a woman of fifty-two.

As a concession to the occasion she put on a dress which was not trimmed with crêpe. . . . It was cut open a little at the neck and she fastened a velvet band with a great diamond clasp in the center about her throat. It covered the wrinkles in the hollow just under her chin. She felt conspicuous wearing jewels again, but undoubtedly they became her. They awoke a brilliancy in her which she had forgotten she possessed.

Lunt exclaimed with pleasure when she came into the room where he was waiting for her. He had brought her a corsage bouquet of violets.

"What a lady's man you have become, Dan!" she exclaimed, as she pinned the flowers to her waist. It was no wonder, she thought, that he was so popular.

They were reasonably gay at dinner, and Ann gave Lunt champagne to drink. "I can't imagine taking a man to the opera unless he has had a glass of champagne," she told him, when he remonstrated with her, "and I want you to like it to-night. I have a special reason for going."

"I wondered how it happened," he confessed.

"I want to see the tenor, Cassinova. I think perhaps I knew him in Paris."

"If I had known that," said Lunt, "I'm not sure I should have come. I'm not so keen on being a party to an old romance. . . . Was it a romance, Ann?"

"Oh, yes," she confessed defiantly, "a great romance,—dead for twenty years! I think that is rather sad."

"If it is sad, we won't talk about it," Lunt declared firmly. "Not to-night. . . . Do you realize that in all these years we have scarcely ever been out alone together? I am glad Peter is away being an iron king, and giving me the chance."

They reached the theater early, and sat leaning over the balcony rail, watching friends take their places in the double tier of boxes on either side, and on the great floor below them. They felt quite lost in the vast remoteness of the balcony. The engagement from which Lunt had basely freed himself had been for the opera, and they laughed together over his fear lest he should be detected, lurking, a shameless deserter, in the plebeian shelter of the upper regions.

Ann wondered at herself that she was not more thrilled at the possibility of seeing Casson again. . . . She had nothing left but curiosity, that most ignoble of emotions.

When the curtain rose and the tenor came on, however, she was conscious of a little pang of disappointment. "It isn't he," she whispered to Daniel Lunt.

This man was obese; a silly creature with a swelling chest and calves. . . . He had a certain magnificence, nevertheless. He moved with distinction, and on the vast stage his very corpulence was in the right scale, but Ann was certain that it was not Casson.

At the first sound of the singer's voice, however, she sat abruptly erect and fixed her glasses on him. . . . There was nothing in his appearance which even remotely suggested the slim and beautiful youth she remembered, but the voice was similar. . . . It was

the same! . . . There could be no doubt of it; there never had been, in all the world, another voice with such a power to thrill her.

Lunt was watching her curiously. "How about it?" he whispered.

A ripple of applause broke over the house and Ann dropped her glasses. "It's too silly. When I look at him I think it can not be Casson, but when I hear him I am sure it must be. What a horrible thing time is!" She could have wept, sitting there in the front row of the balcony of the new Auditorium Theater,—which Peter had taken so important a part in building,—wept because she was an old woman with wrinkles in her throat and because Casson, who had for so long stood for her as a symbol of triumphant youthful beauty, was old, too, and fat and pompous-looking. He was a symbol no longer, nor was she of an age when such things should have been important to her.

Céleste Aïda, however, restored some of the glamour for which she mourned. She thought that it would be impossible to sing that song more beautifully than Cassinova did. It stirred her with a curious combination of esthetic delight and ruthful memory. It was a golden thing. It carried her back to Susanna's lovely drawing-room, where the trees in the garden outside made a green pattern at the windows, and where she had sat young and susceptive, thrilling to the sound of her lover's voice. She leaned back in her seat with a little smile on her lips and tears in her eyes, and allowed Lunt to clap for them both.

The crowded opera-house was applauding wildly. "It really doesn't make any difference if he is fat," she announced contentedly.

"I suppose he wasn't when you knew him."

"No; he was young,—younger than I. Some day I will tell you about it."

"I've always wanted to know," Dan told her.

"When you came back from Europe, I knew you had had some sort of an emotional experience. I was too much interested in you, my dear, not to divine that."

Ann sat for a while turning this over in her mind. Now and then Dan said something that made her wonder if there had been a time when he had cared for her, and she glanced curiously at him as the applause died, and the performance went on. His plain, strongly marked face was very distinguished; he was the sort of man one would notice anywhere. He looked both able and humorous, but the quality which marked him more than anything else was reticence. . . . She wondered if any one had ever penetrated this protective exterior. She was quite sure that his wife had not done so. . . . She wondered, as a woman always wonders, when she believes that a man has loved her, what would have happened to him had she returned his love. Would she have had the key to unlock his closed door, and in doing so, would she have made another man of him? Idle speculations;—her life seemed drained of everything else.

If anything, the evening increased the melancholy which had overwhelmed her since Dannie's death. It brought before her with extraordinary clarity the time in Paris when she had summoned to her the magic remnant of her youth. It had been only six weeks out of her whole life, but they had a disproportionate importance because she had always said to herself that Dannie would never have been what he was, had it not been for the change which took place in her during that magic time. She missed him acutely that night, after Lunt had left her alone in her rich old-fashioned house, empty now of her children,—of everything except her own insignificant future and the memories of her past.

She went into the boy's room and sat there as she often did, looking out across the railroad tracks, to the

lake. A cold moon rode high in a tempestuous sky. Dannie's books were spread about the place just as they had been when he was living in it: everything was quite unchanged. She turned them over on the table, although she knew their titles by heart. Kipling's poems, well thumbed; *Treasure Island,* which, when she took it in her hands, opened at its most exciting pages; Robert Browning. Dannie was just beginning to know him: he loved to have Daniel Lunt read him aloud, and he used to quote from *The Ride from Ghent to Aix* sometimes, with his head thrown back in an exalted way he had when excited. *Huckleberry Finn.*— She held that volume in her hand when she settled down to her vigil by the window, remembering the sick boy who had gallantly chuckled at the fun in it.

Her Benjamin had shown no sign of genius. His gift had been mainly that of appreciation, but never for a moment had her faith that he would do great things flagged, and with his death the possibility of greatness had gone from her life forever. . . . People were always telling her that Peter was great, and certainly he had made for himself a tremendous place in the business world of his day. When she compared his humble beginning to his present spectacular success, she was, of course, enormously proud of him,—but somehow she could not look upon Peter as a great man. She was too close to him. The thing which Dannie had was different;—his had been a direct personal creativeness. He accepted none of the dogmas and shibboleths by which his brothers lived. His mind took nothing for granted, and it was the finest instrument she had ever known.

When the moon finally rode into the high sky of the night, and she could no longer see it from Dannie's window, Ann rose a little stiffly and went into her own room to bed. She had felt companioned by the

moon. Somewhere she thought that Dannie might have been looking at it, too.

She awoke in the morning to realize that she had decided to send for Casson. She was interested to see what he had become, and she wanted to talk to him about Dannie. She felt that she owed it to him to make him see that, while she had denied him and broken his heart, he had given her something infinitely precious which she had transferred to her child. Something, which, as life went on, had become to her the most important thing in it.

2

She sent him a note in which she reminded him of their acquaintance in Paris twenty years before, and asked him to come in on the following afternoon for a cup of tea. She made the day soon because she wanted to see him before Peter came back. Peter was never very sympathetic with tenors; he constitutionally undervalued them. She had her groom wait for an answer to her note, and Casson wrote that he would come.

She had the curtains drawn early in her drawing-room and the new electric lights turned on behind their pink shades. . . . Pink shades were kindly things to old women, she thought, looking at herself gloomily in the French mirror which she had brought back from Paris, and which still hung over the flickering fire in her drawing-room. She stood for a while with one foot on the fender, trying wistfully to recall something of what she must have been like at that faraway time which had suddenly become real again. . . . Her girlhood portrait hung at one end of her drawing-room; it was ridiculously out of style, of course, and yet the painter had given it charm. Ann looked at it dispassionately across the gulf of the

years. She wondered if she had ever been like that, so soft, so feminine and so amazingly innocent. . . . The white muslin was beautifully painted. . . . Dannie had always liked the way she wore her hair, and she had said that he was to have the picture. . . . How much more sensible fashions were now, she thought, recalling Annabel as she had come dutifully in that morning, to make a daughterly visit. She had worn her new tailor-made, which, except for its snug fit about the child's tight-corseted waist, would have been almost mannish. She wore with it a white shirt with a stiff collar, and a hard black sailor hat like a Spaniard's. The only feminine thing about her was the way in which her upper sleeves ballooned out, and Ann rejoiced in those ridiculous puffs, for she hated women to look masculine. The dislike she had for her own changing appearance was secretly based on a conviction that her face had grown no softer with the passing years.

Her drawing-room was full of *objets d' art.* She moved about it aimlessly, picking things up and putting them down again. Dresden figurines, antique snuff boxes, *Sèvres* jars filled with dried rose leaves. There were photographs all about it, too,—photographs of her grandchildren. She smothered a ridiculous desire to put them out of sight. How absurd she was!

Her tea table, with its genuine Georgian service, was placed at exactly the right distance from the fire, and the quiet room was dominated by the hiss of water boiling in the kettle. It was growing late. Her impeccable English butler came into the room now and then, and emanated an atmosphere of discreet disapproval. Presently a bell rang in the distant recesses of the house, and Ann could hear his dignified approach to the front door. Another moment and the room was dominated by the effulgent personality of

Cassinova, the great Italian tenor. She put out her hand, and he bent and kissed it conventionally.

"Dear lady," he murmured, "how kind of you to write." Close to, like this, she found it difficult to believe that this gross creature could be Casson, but his tones struck a warmer note in her memory.

"I felt I must see you," she told him at once. "I wanted to,—frightfully." She thought he looked a little nervous at her impulsive declaration, and she laughed at her own intensity; at the sound Casson looked foolish, but relieved. "Sit down," she said. "It's years, and yet I remember everything as though it were yesterday."

Casson lowered his great bulk carefully into one of the comfortable chairs which were grouped pleasantly about Ann's fire. He expanded into it with a sigh of relief. "Let us not count the years, dear lady. Looking at you, I can believe it was only yesterday."

"Yesterday?" she said, and a trace of wistfulness came into her manner. "Given a brilliant life like yours, time may pass like that! . . . I want to hear all about you,—about your great success,—but first let me give you some tea." She made it as he asked, with three lumps of sugar and plenty of cream, and her butler furnished accessories in the shape of English muffins and cakes.

They talked, before the servant, of the success of the present fortnight of opera, and of how bad the Chicago climate was for tenors' throats. He didn't mind cold weather, Casson assured her. "I often sing at St. Petersburg." But there was something about the wind off Lake Michigan which was singularly trying. Ann sat making banal conversation, and wondering why she had asked him to come. Certainly it gave her little pleasure to entertain this enormous and rather bored gentleman, who sprawled in the chair opposite her.

"You have a beautiful home," he told her seriously.

"You must see my husband's pictures," she said in response. "There is a gallery out beyond the dining-room. Perhaps when you have had your tea, you might care to look at them."

"I should enjoy it very much," he replied conventionally. "I am interested in paintings. I had my portrait done before I left England, when I was singing at Covent Garden in London. It will be the success of the next Royal Academy. Your husband is a business man, I presume?"

Peter's wife found it refreshing to run across some one who didn't know what he was. "Yes, he is in steel. He is away just now." At that, she thought, Casson again showed the slightest trace of nervousness, but at the same time, he glanced at her with an increased intenseness and she realized at once that if he looked upon her in the light of a middle-aged conquest, he was no doubt saying to himself that at least she was an important woman.

At last he finished his tea and declined further ministrations. They were alone and they were still talking interminably of the acoustics of the Auditorium Theater and things of a like nature. It was more than Ann could bear. "Do you know why I asked you to come to-day?" He shook his head, and his fat cheeks trembled a little, but she averted her eyes and continued doggedly. "I wanted to tell you that knowing you in Paris made my whole life different. I wanted you to know that. You did something to me which changed me; I was never quite the same again. I lived more intensely after I knew you. You awakened me. I had more taste,—more I suppose what might be called esthetic sensibility."

There was a little pause which the tenor did not break. Ann continued to look steadily into the fire. "I had a child after I came back," she said. "He died

six months ago, and he was the great happiness of my life. I have always felt that he might have been an artist, if he had lived." She knew that she was saying it badly, but she took an extraordinary satisfaction in saying it at all. She turned after a moment to look at her guest, and was surprised to see that he was struggling with something which she thought must be a great embarrassment.

"Dear friend," he murmured, at length, histrionically but inadequately.

She was unwarmed by the rich tone of his voice.—What was the matter with him, she wondered. What had she said to throw him into this unhappy confusion?

"Memories!" he ejaculated, meeting her eyes miserably. She could see that he was distracted and sparring for time. . . . All at once she divined that he was trying wildly to remember something. Finally he took a great resolution. He leaned toward her across her carefully appointed tea table, and in a heavy undertone, laden with the most perfect technique in the expression of emotion, he said, "I did not know there was a child."

Ann looked at him in the blankest amazement. She knew now the reason for his confusion, and what the memory was for which he had searched in vain. She recalled the desperate young man from whom she had fled in Paris: she remembered how all these years she had blamed herself because she had broken his heart. And now what he wanted to know, and what he couldn't very well bring himself to ask, was whether it was possible that the child of whom she spoke was his, and that he had forgotten so trifling a possibility. She struggled with a desire to laugh, and then suddenly she became coldly indignant. His heavy whisper, "I did not know there was a child," had barely died away when she rallied.

"There was," she said clearly and explicitly. "He

was born two years after I came home from Europe." She did not care in the least about putting herself right before this coarse creature who could not recall what ladies had capitulated to his charms and what ladies had not. She only felt that she must clear Dannie.

She looked coldly at Casson's confusion. "If you really won't have any more tea," she said, "come and see Peter's pictures."

She took him out to the picture gallery, and a servant came and lighted it for them. Her companion exclaimed over Peter's treasures, and showed considerable appreciation of them, but she could see that he could not recover from his embarrassment over his great lapse, and indeed she did not wonder. By this time she thought that it was the funniest thing she had ever heard. She was simply dying, as she stood before Peter's latest Corot, talking somewhat wildly of the Barbizon school, to tell some one all about it. . . . Dannie would have delighted in anything so funny. . . . But she could never tell Peter: it would simply corroborate his feeling about tenors.

They were interrupted by Annabel and her friend, gay little Mrs. Winton, who lived across the street; the two young women stood round-eyed in the doorway as they took in Ann's exotic companion. "Well, mother!" Her daughter's hearty tones had in them a measure of discreet condemnation.

"I am glad to see you," Ann said truthfully. "Let me introduce Signor Cassinova,—Mrs. Winton, and my daughter, Mrs. Loomis." She could see that her pretty neighbor's eyes sparkled as she came forward, and when she turned to the tenor, she found that a subtle change had taken place in him. It was as if he stood at attention, in order to meet this onslaught of charming young womanhood. He bent a great deal at what should have been his waist, and he received

Mrs. Wilson's murmured compliments on his performance with the most urbane suavity. Looking at him, Ann wondered, with biting self-disgust, how she could ever have fancied that she cared for him. She laughed at herself, with bitter inward laughter.

Casson took a reluctant early departure because of his evening performance. Peter's butler bundled him into an opulent fur coat and shut the door stolidly behind him. It was a symbolic sound to Ann, who sat again at her tea table, with the crash of a mental slam reverberating through her inner consciousness.

"Mother, where did you know a man like that?" Annabel demanded.

Little Mrs. Winton chimed in smoothly, "Dear Mrs. Smith,—you know all the interesting people!"

Daniel Lunt came in before the two young women had finished their tea, and Annabel at once said to him, "Oh, Uncle Dan, what a pity you didn't come before! You never would guess who I found mother with.—Cassinova! She won't tell us where she knew him, either. I must say it was bad enough for her to have a luncheon party for Bernhardt last year, without my coming in and finding tenors all over the house!" She laughed heartily at this, and while Daniel Lunt smiled, Ann could see that he was looking at her somewhat sharply.

The two young women drew their furs about them in a few moments, and prepared to make further visits. "It's Tuesday afternoon," Mrs. Winton explained. "Every one's day at home! It seems to me that I owe a call at every house on Prairie Avenue."

Alone with Lunt, Ann looked at him and laughed. "You've found me out," she said. "And now that you have, I'll tell you something amusing." She told him the whole story but he did not smile nor think it funny. "You must laugh!" she expostulated. "For twenty years I have reproached myself for running

away from that young man, when he had every reason to think I was going to be compliant,—and dear me, Dan, he didn't remember whether I had run away or not! If you could have seen him, so fat and so miserable, and at the same time so pleased with himself! Do you know what he called me? He called me, 'Dear friend,'—just like a gentleman in a French novel!"

"The great ass!"

"No. . . . It was I who was foolish. I actually believed he really cared for me. . . . There is nothing left for me now but to be a cynical old lady! I have lost my only illusion."

Lunt was standing by the fire, looking down into it. He did not turn as he said, "I am more fortunate than you. I have preserved mine."

Something in his tone kept Ann silent, and after a moment Daniel turned to her: she was a trifle uneasy under his steady gaze.

"Sad, are you, because a tenor has played you false? There is a poem that Irishman Yeats wrote, Ann: I think I can remember it.

" 'So many loved your moments of glad grace,
And loved your beauty, with love false or true,
But one man loved the pilgrim soul in you
And loved the sorrows in your changing face.'

"You think about that, my dear, when you talk about becoming a cynical old lady."

CHAPTER XXXVIII

IDLE PETER

As LONG as Dannie was alive his father continued to work with enthusiasm, but when he was gone, and all the distressing business of the funeral was over and done with, he found himself, for the first time in his active life, without a goal. By the death of the boy he had lost not merely the joy of his lovely childhood, but the fine promise of his manhood as well: he now first realized definitely he had long been taking it for granted that his son would carry on his work when he laid it down, and that much of his labor had been given so to order the business that those young shoulders might bear the load when the time should come.

"I used to think," he said to Daniel Lunt, "that Dannie would begin where I left off, and be a bigger man that I ever dreamed of being."

"Hendricks is a fine, careful fellow, Pete."

"Yes,—but he is slated to be the next President of the Chicago National, and wild horses couldn't drag him away from it."

"Does Peets know anything about the business?"

"Peets? God, no! . . . Have you heard the talk that is going around about Peets and some burlesque actress?"

Lunt nodded guardedly. "I doubt if there is much in it," he said. He was sorry that the tale had reached Peter.

"'Where there is so much smoke there must be

some fire,'" his friend quoted grimly. "I only hope Emily doesn't hear of it, and that the papers don't get hold of it. . . . The boy is a weak fool:—a woman like that! . . . Well, he shan't have the steel business to hang around the neck of some harlot,—that's certain."

"Hendricks' boys are coming along, Pete. His elder one always reminds me of Dannie."

Peter nodded. "That's what Annie says. . . . But he is only nine years old."

"Have you ever thought of selling out to the National Steel?"

Peter shot a quick look across at his lawyer, and lowered his bushy eyebrows in a heavy frown. "These combinations won't look so good after they've been through a panic and had some of the water wrung out of them," he declared. "I can run my plant a damn sight better than any group of men can run it as a part of a trust."

"I dare say,—but undoubtedly you could get a good price for it."

"It isn't for sale," Peter growled. "I control enough ore to keep us going indefinitely, and if the combination wants to fight me,—I'll fight if I have to build my own fleet!"

"That settles it," Lunt said soberly, "but you are going against the tendency of the times, Pete. . . . The day of the individual is about over."

The thought of battle invigorated Peter, and for a time he was able to ignore the future: but inevitably the insidious question, "What am I doing this for?" intruded itself, and took the triumph out of his successes.

Those were days of vast expansion in the steel trade, and this very growth seemed constantly to raise the question for Peter as to what would happen when the psalmist's threescore years and ten were run out.

No matter how fast his business grew it was being outstripped by its rivals: it was apparent that the future of the steel trade would witness a battle of giants, and that there would be no place for weaklings. J. P. Morgan and some of the lesser princes of Wall Street were developing a plan for a giant trust which aimed to combine the business of both the East and the West. The National Steel went in, but Peter declined to enter into negotiations. He called his directors together to discuss the matter, but while most of them were eager to take advantage of the opportunity to withdraw from competition with so formidable a foe, Peter controlled the situation, and the Smith and Jefferson Company defied the trust.

His sons were in favor of selling. As a banker, Hendricks foresaw the danger of competition with a combination which, through its powerful affiliations, would be able to control railroads and other great buyers of steel, and in addition to this, he, too, had begun to wonder who would carry on the family interests should anything happen to his father. "It is time you began to enjoy life," he told him, with hollow geniality.

Peets was frankly terrified at the idea of opposing Wall Street. "They'll eat you up," he said to his father nervously, the only time they discussed the matter. To Hendricks he was more expansive. "I believe the old boy has gone off his chump!" he declared.

Daniel Lunt also advised capitulation. "If I were in your place I should sell out while the selling is good. They may force you to worse terms later."

Only Ann, when she was finally consulted, proved to be against it. "Peter, darling, idleness will make an old man of you," she said. "It doesn't make any difference if you lose money, but what will you do with your life if you have no work?"

"I'll enjoy it," Peter told her, made savage by

hearing her voice his own secret fear. "You are always nagging me about travel: we'll see the world, and I'll have time to do a lot of things I've always wanted to. . . . And I am an old man, Annie. I am older than I have any right to be at my time of life."

"Take a rest for a while, and then see how you feel about retiring."

"Rest?" Peter snorted. "How can I rest? The men I am associated with want to sell out. It is only by sticking fast that I can prevent them: I can't afford to miss a day."

"You will be miserable with nothing to do."

"I'll have Peets teach me how to loaf," Peter returned dryly. He was feeling bitterly against his son: his rigid sense of decency was outraged at the sort of talk he was creating, and he meant to speak to him about it, but one of the signs of fatigue, which made him secretly convinced that he was losing his grip, was that he put so unpleasant an interview off from day to day.

One by one, the big steel interests capitulated, and went into the new combination. Again and again the men in control tried to arrive at an agreement with the Smith and Jefferson Company, but Peter was able to hold back his directors, although feeling on his board ran high. Gradually they forced him into the position where the question of selling out to the trust became a matter of price. Peter's obstinacy brought succeeding offers, and finally the day came when his most insolent demand was met, and the Smith and Jefferson Company, so long his own creation and instrument, became a part of the new company to be known as the United States Steel Corporation.

2

Peter Smith then became a lonely figure, behind his stacks of gold bonds: it availed him little that he was

amazingly rich. Many of his old friends had taken on newer and more intimate associations: many of them had died. His stubborn opposition had made him enemies: he was said to be a "trouble-maker," who had relished competition for the fighting it involved. . . . He was thought old-fashioned, too, for he resented combinations, whether of labor or of capital. He felt that men who were unable to stand alone must be essentially soft-fibered, and he could not help showing it. He found himself getting less out of lunching at the club than he had expected during the years of his self-imposed exile. He was glad when the consolidation was finally completed, and he was free to start off with Ann on their long contemplated trip abroad.

They sailed in November and went directly through to Monte Carlo, but it was out of season, and the Monaco resort was dreary. They went every evening to the Casino, where Peter gambled, sternly, as one who does so from a sense of duty.

"There is nothing in this black and red game," he said to Ann. "For real excitement, it doesn't touch good old American poker."

He made enough money to have interested him, however, had he not long since become immune to the thrill of that pastime. He piled his gold pieces on the table with a careless prodigality which made *habitués* look in astonishment at the inconspicuous, gray bearded citizen of North America, who, with so little display of temperament, risked fortunes on the turn of the wheel.

"Il a l'air ennuié!" they said.

The Smiths spent the most dreary Christmas of their lives in Rome. They dined in their suite, where Ann ordered the nearest approach to American dishes which could be had, and invited to join them several shoddy compatriots who were staying in the hotel. They were people she would never have thought of entertaining in Chicago: it made her want to laugh or

ery, she was not certain which, to hear her leonine Peter try to talk business with the pallidly sporting or artistic gentlemen who were his fellow expatriates.

3

In April they went to Paris, where for the first time they saw Susanna and Titus. Ann was quite upset at the thought of meeting her friends again, and in the cab on their way to take luncheon with them even Peter smoked his cigar with a steadiness which betrayed a tension he would have denied. . . . The straight driveway seemed shorter than the one Ann recalled, and the house somewhat smaller. . . . They went in, and passed up the gracious sweep of Susanna's staircase. The lovely *salons* opened up on either hand, just as Ann remembered, and in the right-hand one two figures, blurred against the sunlit windows, came forward.

"My dear Ann!" The voice was high, and there was a faint trace of a foreign accent, but the speaker was unmistakably Susanna. The two women met, and kissed. . . . Ann breathed a strong odor of scents and cosmetics, and her lips touched a soft cheek. She drew back. How black her friend's hair was:—blacker, surely, than it had been!

Titus was pumping Peter's arm up and down, and calling him an old scout,—"A damned good old scout!" He put out his free hand, and seized Ann's, heartily. "Ann, too!" he ejaculated. "Great stuff! Fine to see you!" He was immensely changed: he looked like an old man, and something mechanical had come into his once engaging geniality.

They went in and sat by the fire while they waited for luncheon to be announced, and a sudden silence fell upon them,—the silence of appraisal. It was broken by Titus.

"There is a cocktail coming," he announced. "I have had a great time teaching these Frogs how to make 'em, but you'll find it all right, Pete. You wouldn't be able to get a better one at the Chicago Club."

"I don't ordinarily drink at noon," Peter responded, "but to-day I'll go as far as you like!"

Susanna laughed: "Don't be rash," she cautioned him, in her thin high voice. "Titus goes pretty far! You don't know what you may be getting into."

The cocktails came, and after drinking them the little party of four brightened perceptibly. Titus assured Ann that she hadn't changed,—"Not a mite, by gad!"—and Ann brought herself to say to Susanna: "My dear,—how young you look!" She did look amazingly young, only there was something somehow specious in that late rosy bloom.

At the table Jeff congratulated Peter on having sold out. "There is nothing like a good Trust to take your troubles off your hands!" he said genially.

"Fancy working like that all these years!" Susanna added. "It must be heaven to be free!"

Peter tasted his red wine, and kept a discreet silence. After a few moments he said to Titus, "What do you find to do all the time, Jeff?"

"Do? . . . Oh, there's plenty to do! The Races. . . . The *Révues*. . . . There's a lot to do in Paris all the time. I'll take you over the jumps, if Ann will let you off some night."

"But what do you do in the mornings?" Peter persisted. It was a serious question in his own life, and he meant to see how his friend had solved it.

"My dear Peter,—there are no mornings!" Susanna told him brightly. "Titus never goes to bed until four o'clock:—you can imagine the time he gets up!"

The steel man looked thoughtfully across the table

at his friend: he was thinking that it was no wonder he looked broken. "I couldn't stand that pace long," he said, trying to throw admiration into his voice.

"You could train up to it!" Jeff assured him, with a great gust of laughter which took years from him.

Under cover of it Susanna turned to Ann. "Have you bought any clothes yet?" she demanded passionately. "There's a new place: they make charming things and they understand how to keep one young. You must let me take you there."

"I wish you would," Ann said gratefully. "I suppose I must get something to dazzle Chicago with,—and I want to find a frock for Annabel,—and my daughters-in-law, too."

Susanna leaned closer. "You have—grandchildren, haven't you?" she asked, and she shivered a trifle. "My dear,—I was so sorry when I heard of the first one! I meant to write you a letter of condolence,—but you know how one puts that sort of thing off."

"But, Susanna, I adore them."

Her friend laughed. "You can talk all you like," she declared, "but you'll never make me believe you!"

After luncheon they drove out to Versailles in Jefferson's brake, and once there Peter amazed his friends by insisting on seeing the palace. He was firm about it, in spite of their protestations. "I've got to do it sometime," he told them, "and there's no use taking this trip twice."

As Susanna was obviously devastated at the idea of subjecting herself to sight-seeing, Ann stifled a desire of her own to have another glimpse of the apartments where Marie Antoinette had lived, and the two women seated themselves on the sunny terrace overlooking the gardens, while Peter dragged Titus off with him. In the doorway they could see him annexing a particularly Gallic looking gentleman with a

sign on his chest which read, "Claude the English Guide."

Susanna blushed a little under her rouge. "I hope no one we know sees them," she said sharply. She looked very pretty in her hat and veil, and almost convincingly young.

Sitting there with her Ann felt curiously worn. "You do look amazingly well," she said in involuntary admiration.

Susanna had a sudden burst of frankness. "My dear, I ought to," she said, "I give my life to it." She looked Ann over critically. "I think you are very silly to let your hair get gray," she told her severely. "I can tell you of a place where they dye it so you would never dream it wasn't natural. . . . They will take care of those wrinkles around the eyes, too: they give wonderful facials in Paris."

"Facials?" It was something of which Ann had never heard.

"Yes,—massage. I have one every day. It takes about two hours."

Ann looked at her friend in amazement not untinged with admiration. There was something valiant in this dogged effort to retain youth,—something almost magnificent in continuing to wage so evidently a losing fight. "I'm afraid I could never give all that time to it," she said, with a trace of wistfulness.

"Why not?" Susanna countered sharply. "Surely there is nothing more important."

"Somehow in Chicago I was always busy, and now that I have Peter on my hands, I can see that I shan't have two minutes to myself, let alone two hours."

"My dear, wait until Titus takes him in hand!" Susanna said, smiling at her friend with a sudden disquieting look of the thoroughly disillusioned woman.

Peter came back in a fine glow of satisfaction at having accomplished something. "That's done," he said, contentedly.

4

Peter was interested in Paris, and at Cook's he found a gentlemanly guide who led him about the city, and, with extraordinary efficiency, enabled him to dispose one by one of the things he wanted to see. Ann would have been glad to send him off without her, in order to attend to her shopping, but Peter was miserable unless she accompanied him, and while he thoroughly enjoyed buying things in Paris himself, he was not in the least interested in dressmakers' establishments.

The opportunity to get pictures enchanted him, and he sent home canvas after canvas, nothwithstanding his wife's protests. "If we haven't room for them I'll build an addition to the gallery," he said. "It would give me something to do, anyhow."

He bought *objets d' art,* also: among them were a pair of Sèvres vases as tall as a man, a table with a malachite top, two gray marble pillars, several Empire mantel sets of clock and candelabra, some pieces of antique French furniture which caught his eye, old velvet for portières, and chandeliers entirely innocent of modern wiring.

"The children can use them if we decide we don't want them," he told Ann in excuse of this orgy.

"They hate this sort of thing, Peter. They have all gone mad about colonial furniture."

"Well, fortunately we have a good-sized attic," he returned dryly. He had no intention of being curbed, and his wife really did not care what he bought. She was delighted to see him show so much interest in anything.

She found him difficult to entertain. In spite of some opposition on his part, she took him to see Sarah Bernhardt at the *Théâtre Français* and they both spent a miserable evening, for Peter's gloom entirely

ruined her own chance of enjoyment. "How can I get anything out of a play when I don't speak the language?" he asked irritably, from time to time. He was perversely set on disliking it.

After that Ann tried a farce, but her husband was uncomfortable at it. "This is no place for you," he said to her sternly, making her feel very Victorian indeed.

Even the restaurants proved to be a disappointment, for Peter did not care about French food, and while the contemporaneous life in cafés interested him, his inability to secure a good porterhouse steak made meals in them anything but gala occasions.

Titus and Susanna entertained them gallantly, but as Peter did not speak French he proved to be a heavy load at a dinner party, and after one experience of sitting miserably dumb between two women, he declined to subject himself to further gaiety of that sort. Ann thought Susanna was relieved, but Jefferson carried out his promise to put Peter over the jumps.

"I'll take him where no one will care what he speaks!" he said in jovial reassurance.

It was Ann who made Peter go. He was himself rather nervous about it, and as she tied his evening tie, she admonished him, "If you are shocked, Peter, don't let Jeff see it,—no matter what he may take you to!"

She looked after him when he left her with a tender little smile in her eyes, composed about equally of humor and affection. As for herself,—she had a free evening and she had successfully withstood Susanna's polite effort to fill it. She knew what she wanted to do, and having dressed herself discreetly for the street, she requested the *concierge* to call her a *fiacre*. She settled back in the shallow seat with a sigh of contentment. She meant to drive all over Paris in the soft spring moonlight, and see again, by

herself, with no unsympathetic critic present, those places which had given her so much joy when she had been there before,—so long ago that it seemed as though it must have been in a previous existence.

It was eleven o'clock when she returned, and shortly after twelve Peter came in. Hearing him in the next room, Ann called to him. "My gracious, Peter! What are you doing home at this hour? Susanna says Titus never gets in until four o'clock!"

Peter went into his wife's room and stood at the foot of her bed. The light from the open door struck a bright path through the dusk, and Ann could see his face quite plainly. Disgust was written on it, and something not entirely removed from horror.

"This is the devil of a town, Annie," he said gruffly. "Let's go home."

CHAPTER XXXIX

THE SHADOW

As Ann sat opposite Peter in the drawing-room of their Pullman, looking out of the window at the familiar Chicago environs she was speeding through, she could not help contrasting her second return from Europe with the first. Then she had come back to take up again a burden of family responsibility: her little children had needed her, and a thousand ties apart from those merely of affection had bound her. Now she had a miserable conviction that it would have made no real difference to any one had she remained abroad for the rest of her natural life. Her children were all launched on voyages of their own: she could count on their being kind, but there was no use in deluding herself into believing that they needed her. They didn't. They needed her no more than she had needed Mr. Cortlandt when she first came to Chicago, embarked on her own great adventure. . . . Out of the busy welter of her past only Peter remained dependent upon her as she was on him, and it struck her as curious that on her previous return he had seemed the least of her responsibilities. The orbits of their lives, which had swung them on widely different paths at the zenith, were drawing them together as they approached the horizon. It did not occur to her to be either glad or sorry about it: it was inevitable.

She glanced at Peter across the narrow Pullman seat. He was looking rather grim, and she wondered

of what he was thinking, but she did not ask him. She never invaded his privacy in that fashion. . . . She was afraid that the children would think he had aged in the last few months; he seemed to her older, and she was not satisfied with his general condition. Notwithstanding his vacation, his vitality was greatly lowered, and he got up in the morning tired. Something resembling dread clutched at her heart as she looked at him.

The train slid into the station and came to a suave stop. Peter was fussing about the bags, and Ann went out ahead of him to meet the children. She could see them just down the platform, and after having been away from them for a number of months, she had a fresh and startled impression of the way they looked: there was an air of almost flagrant well-being about the compact little group. Suddenly a red-headed lad ran forward from it to greet her, and for an instant Ann's heart fluttered sickeningly, because he was so like Dannie, but it was, of course, only little H. C. In a moment Hendricks was putting a comfortably protecting arm around her, and kissing her in the calm, self-contained fashion she so well remembered. And there was Annabel, stocky like her father, but pretty in a wholesome, matronly fashion, with little Jimmie Loomis smiling beside her. They both kissed her affectionately, and Ann had a heartening consciousness of liking her son-in-law before Peets, handsome, a trifle overdressed, a trifle too sure of his charm, engulfed her in a huge comforting hug. As they all pushed past her to greet Peter, she was suddenly overwhelmed with a curiously tremulous pride at the realization that they were hers,—these great, independent, self-sufficient creatures.

Annabel was asking her questions. "Why in the world did you come home at the beginning of the summer like this? What will you do now?"

Hendricks chimed in smoothly. "You surprised us somewhat," he said. "We hoped you were getting enough out of it to stay over."

His son pushed in between him and his mother. "Say, grandma, did you bring me a watch? You said you would bring me a watch."

The house on Prairie Avenue was congested with packing cases sent from Europe, and already, although it was only May, the weather was arid. After the children had left them, Peter and Ann sat down and looked at each other with a certain amount of dismay.

"What are we going to do next?" she demanded desperately.

2

Peter went to see an architect about enlarging the picture gallery. He had a definite idea of what he wanted, and had planned the contemplated change with such minuteness that the talented young man who began to make drawings for him had some difficulty in dislodging these previously conceived and altogether mistaken conceptions. . . . The alteration proved to be a more important piece of work than Peter had expected. Matters of proportion which involved changing the height of the room and the door openings threw the whole house into confusion, and that being the case, Peter decided that he might as well put in new wiring and plumbing throughout. In these conditions, the house became extremely uncomfortable to live in, and summer proved to be no time to linger in town. Chicago was growing dirtier; the pleasant side porch where so many gay summer evenings had been spent was too grimy to be longer enjoyed, and in addition to the smoke which came in the windows, the entire place was covered with a white dust of plaster. Ann was desperate. She talked of going to Rye Beach,—to Colorado,—back to Europe,

—but she found that Peter could not be persuaded to leave his alterations. It was Hendricks who finally solved the problem. He and Annabel had both rented in Lake Forest for the summer, and one day he came into the devastation of the Prairie Avenue house to announce that he had found a place for his father in their immediate neighborhood.

Ann was enchanted at the idea of being away from the confusion in town, and for a time she thought that Peter, too, would be satisfied, as he talked large talk of having been born on a farm and of enjoying country life, but a few days of it satisfied him, and he began going in to the city in a tentative sort of fashion. At the end of a fortnight he was commuting back and forth regularly every day. He established a routine which at once became sacred: he spent the morning at his house, frowning on the workmen; he lunched at the club, and in the afternoon he went to offices which he had taken in the Chicago National Bank Building, where he kept a perfect private secretary, and a safe filled with papers containing a record of his past achievements which he never failed to find interesting. It surprised him to note with what speed an afternoon slipped away when he was looking them over. Daniel Lunt's offices were on the same floor, and Peter often consulted with him. Although he said nothing about it to any member of his family, he began what grew to be a habit of making continual changes in his will.

Ann found that she had come home to entirely different conditions from any which she had known before. Life was slipping past her: it was getting away from her; she was losing her grip on it. Since Dannie's death she had withdrawn from the gay world, and now she found that the gay world had, to a great extent, forgotten her. For the first month in the country she and Peter lived practically alone in the strange

house which they had rented. With the exception of the family no one seemed to notice particularly that they had joined the suburban colony, and Ann was piqued. It was four years since she had entertained and she decided that it was time she did something which should prove she still lived. She said one day to Annabel, "My dear, I am thinking of giving a party."

Annabel smiled at her with the air of maddening acquiescence with which she lately greeted all her parents' suggestions. "What a good idea," she said falsely. "Why don't you have a children's party for little Annie on her birthday? You know she will be five, next month."

There was something rather subtle in the look her mother gave her. "I shall be glad to do that, of course," she said urbanely. "But I was thinking, just now, of something possibly a little more adult. I thought of giving a dinner dance, Annabel."

Her daughter was obviously startled at this suggestion. "Of course, dinner dances are very smart," she said dubiously, and changed the subject with an air of one who did not take the suggestions of the aged seriously.

Peets was more sympathetic. Emily was in Newport, but he was apparently in no haste to join her, and was spending a few weeks in town alone. As always, he was charmed at the idea of a party: it aroused in him an inventive quality which nothing else ever stirred. "Great stuff, mother!" he said. "Who will you have it for?"

"For myself," Ann replied firmly. "I am sure I know no one who needs it more."

Annabel opened the invitation at the breakfast table, and looked across at her husband in real consternation. "I never thought she was serious!" she exclaimed, handing him the card. "I don't know what I can do about mother, Jimmie."

"She seems to be attending to herself very well," Jimmie observed. "I think you treat her too much as if she were an old woman."

His wife stared at him in an amazement which was almost comic. "My dear, she has nine grandchildren," she said conclusively.

The dinner dance was a complete success. People ate all over the house,—on the porches, and in the hall and parlors, as well as in the dining-room. Ann had said tartly to Annabel, "I should hope I can still order a good dinner," and she proved that to be true, but she allowed Peets to attend to the drinks. He insisted on serving cocktails, which his mother considered a doubtful innovation, but which started the affair going with a bang, and he kept the champagne circulating all the evening. A large, unclouded moon rose politely over the lake during dinner, and colored lanterns were strung across the lawn, leading to a great gay markee, and a really excellent dancing floor. Ann felt extraordinarily young that evening. She even waltzed now and then, with Daniel Lunt or with some friend of her children. Every one was sorry when midnight came, and, it then being Sunday morning, the party automatically stopped.

Peets and Daniel Lunt were spending the night. "Sit down for a minute and have just one more drink," the younger man said persuasively. "It was a good party, mother."

Ann was gazing remorsefully at Peter, who looked tired and grim. "Oh, good enough," she said impatiently. Suddenly her gaiety dropped away from her and she was a weary, oldish woman, facing a sleepless night.

Daniel Lunt lighted a new cigar. "It was a great success, Ann," he said judicially. "How did you happen to think of giving it?"

She laughed a little drearily. "I thought it was

time Peter and I got back on the map," she confessed defiantly.

"If that means going out to dinner every night," Peter interposed, "I shall go in town to stay. I have to take the eight o'clock train in the morning," he added, in grudging explanation of his irritability.

Peets rallied him. "Oh, come, father, the house will get along without you for a day! Why don't you stay out here and enjoy yourself? Why don't you learn to play golf?"

Peter glared at his son. "Golf?" he said impatiently. "I haven't time for it."

Peets was blandly impervious to his father's irritation. "It isn't a bad game," he said thoughtfully. "Is it, Uncle Dan?"

The lawyer smiled. "By no means. I'll beat you at it yet, you rascal."

Ann looked at Lunt wistfully. She knew him to be considerably older than she, but he was beginning to seem younger. She wondered if the active mental life he led kept him supple, or if it were because she was a woman that she seemed to have passed him. She wondered, also, if she were in danger of losing the friendship which had meant so much in her life. This became one of the principal fears among the terrors which surrounded her.

She was entirely successful in her effort to bring herself into people's minds, and the result of her dance was a succession of invitations which, because of Peter, she accepted with some misgivings. For a while they dined out violently, but she found that there was little in it, after all, and she told Daniel Lunt, "The perfect life is to be invited to everything,—and to send regrets."

When they opened the gallery in the autumn Peter's new French Impressionist pictures created a real sensation, and Ann's Tuesdays at home were well at-

tended. She gave a succession of ladies' lunch parties, also, as well as, early in January, a fancy dress ball for Annabel and her two daughters-in-law. She had made valiant plans for further entertaining, but shortly after the holidays Peter came down with a cold which developed into a new and fashionable malady known as "La Grippe." He was not very ill, but it left him in a miserable condition: he was irritable, and disposed to be critical both of her and of his children.

On the whole Ann found the winter dreary, and in the spring she suffered a real grief when Nora, who had given her devoted service for almost forty years, died. Outside of the immediate circle of her family, there was no one in the world to whom Ann was so much attached, nor had she owned a more faithful friend. Nora's life had been curiously bound up in that of her mistress: she had no relations left in Chicago, nor, indeed, nearer than Ireland, and Hendricks had to see to it that her savings, carefully hoarded through a frugal life-time, were forwarded to nieces and nephews whom she had never seen. She was buried in a corner of Peter's family lot, in a bit of especially consecrated ground. She and Dannie lay all alone there, and Ann had a warm feeling, as she left the cemetery after the funeral, that the boy was now looked after.

She simply could not immediately deal with the problem of securing an alien cook, and in order to avoid it, she and Peter went west in a private car, taking with them several of the older grandchildren, and Daniel Lunt. They were in Colorado when the news of President McKinley's assassination reached them, and the three adults were profoundly shocked.

"That's what all this unrest comes to," Peter declared violently. "Anarchy and assassination!"

Even Daniel Lunt, who ordinarily faced changes with a certain amount of equanimity, was shaken.

"The President was a type," he said slowly. "He was representative of that passing thing,—our age of privilege."

3

Five years after his father's return from Europe Peets' family moved back to New York. This was a blow to his mother, although as her son had no longer a pretense of work to occupy him, she had known that there was nothing to keep him in Chicago. She knew she would miss Peets: there was something in his light-hearted and casual gaiety which appealed to her as it did to vastly younger and lighter ladies with whom rumor persistently connected his name. He "had a way," even with his mother.

People became restless in the first decade of the new century. They traveled more, and they moved about in a casual and disturbing fashion. Suburban life attracted many of them, and when business encroached on the south side others deserted their old family establishments for new houses in the section along the lake to the north of the town. Annabel caught the contagion and at length approached her parents with the suggestion that they have a general family migration. "Let's all build on the Lake Shore Drive," she urged. "Every one we know is moving over there."

Lily, whose acquiescence in her elders' decisions ordinarily amounted to servility, surprisingly seconded this plea. "Annette is twelve," she said, and the troubled frown, which always knotted her forehead when she spoke of her family, made its appearance. "If she is going to know the right girls, we shall have to send her over to the north side to school every day."

Ann was rather taken by the idea of moving. It would give her husband something to do, and it might, she thought, be cleaner on the north side, but Peter was entirely obdurate.

"Not until I move to Graceland Cemetery," he said firmly, and that ended the matter, although during the winter Hendricks bought a lot on the other side of the river.

"It is just as well to have it," he said soothingly. "Property is going up in value. I have no intention of building on it."

Ann was not greatly deceived by this assurance, nor was she surprised when architects' plans for a new house began to be introduced into family conclaves. . . . Without saying very much about it, they all understood that Hendricks was going to move. He was determined to have something magnificent in the way of a dwelling, as befitted the new president of the Chicago National Bank, and after a great deal of discussion on the subject, he engaged an eastern architect, who built him a chunky, gray stone fortress, which might, given a good supply of molten lead, have repelled invaders for an indefinite period.

Peter found that he was interested in the building, and he drove his span of bays across the city almost every day, in order to superintend its growth. Every one knew who the old man with the old-fashioned pair was, and the policeman at Rush Street bridge saluted him when he drove across.

Annabel was miserable with envy of her brother's new house. From the soot of Prairie Avenue, she looked to the north side as to the promised land, and when the wind from the southwest brought a hearty odor of the stockyards across her section of the city, she complained of it as bitterly as though it were an innovation, instead of something to which she had been inured from her cradle. Her mother could see well enough that the period of close family life was doomed, and it was she who persuaded her father to give Annabel a lot near Hendricks' for a Christmas present.

The following year found Ann and Peter alone in

the old neighborhood which had changed with such extraordinary quickness. Many of the houses about them where their friends had lived, and which were haunted by the memories of past intimacies, were closed: in the midst of their discreet yards they bulked, —large, decaying and melancholy reminders of an outworn past. Others were rented to women who took in boarders, and in windows where layer on layer of lace curtains had been wont to hang in valiant disregard of smoke, signs advertising rooms to rent, or requesting ice men to call, might be seen. There were, of course, a few old families who clung conservatively, as the Peter Smiths did, to the place in which they belonged, and still on Tuesday afternoons there was, up and down the street, a sprinkling of hansom cabs and broughams, with now and then a motor. Old ladies emerged from them, bent on keeping up ancient associations, but on the whole the south side had grown dreary.

Even Peter was obliged to admit it. The children came down often; they were there regularly for Sunday night supper, and they made a point of turning up at odd times. They were, as their mother said, "very kind," and she made no complaint of them. Her life narrowed down largely to trying to amuse and look after Peter. He resented both efforts; he wanted to be neither looked after nor amused, but obviously he needed both attentions. Ann had her moments of rebellion, for she grew stale under the regimen to which she subjected herself, but there seemed to be nothing to do about it. Peter's condition worried her, for all his early vigor and sturdiness seemed gone: at sixty-five he was like an old man. The doctors could find nothing organically wrong. It was only, they said, that his energy had been burned away in the strenuous effort of his earlier life, and that idleness was bad for him. They came, too late, to the conclusion that it had been a mistake for him to retire from business.

"You were cleverer than any of us, Ann," Lunt told her.

She replied wistfully, "Ah, Dan, if you had only listened to me! After all, I know my Peter."

4

Peter continued to buy pictures, and made two or three really important purchases in the years which intervened between his trip abroad and his death: the directors of the art museum took a great interest in his collection. He spent a large part of his time in his gallery, sitting lost in thought and apparently paying little attention to the canvases. He liked the atmosphere of the place. It was, now that his business had been taken away from him, more his own than any other thing he knew, and, smoking his inevitable black cigar, he would there review his life eternally. It was queer what things ran through his mind: he dwelt more often on the years of his struggle than the years of his success. He recalled the storms he had weathered before he became an old man shut up in a house with women; he had done something, he would tell himself proudly, and then doubt would intervene. Had he, as a matter of cold fact, done anything for which he would be remembered except possibly the thing which had been his one dissipation in life,—collecting the pictures which surrounded him? . . . Beauty! It was strange what a value it had,—and strange, too, if his name, which in his time had meant so much in the lusty iron and steel game, should be remembered because he had gathered it about him!

His children counted curiously little with him. Peets was in a mess with some woman in New York, and Daniel Lunt had trouble persuading Emily not to divorce him. A pretty thing that would have been, and a wild lot Peets was! . . . Hendricks, on the

other hand, admirable as he was, had a cautious quality which his father resented; he had always liked headlong people. He also remembered, and as time went on held it against his elder son, that it was he who had insisted on selling the Smith and Jefferson Company. It had proved to be a good thing from a point of view of investment, but to his last day Peter regretted it. That was all Hendricks thought about,—investments! . . . And Annabel? The child patronized him; she treated him like an old man! No, the worth of life was not to be determined by the descendants one left behind. A man must stand on his own feet: what he himself had done was the important thing,—not what some pert grandchild might some day accomplish, long after he was gone.

On the whole, however, although his thoughts often depressed him, his life did not seem to him to have been in any way a failure. It was a curious fact that when he reviewed other men's pasts they invariably seemed futile, but his own was different, and he was convinced that his fight had been worth the waging, although he would have been put to it to say why.

5

It was late in the afternoon on the day when Peter was buried that his family returned to the house on Prairie Avenue, and Ann went up-stairs to lay aside her veil before she had her tea.

The children, lugubrious in their new black clothes, gathered about the fire in the drawing-room, and in lowered voices discussed the trivialities of the day.

"I never saw such lovely flowers," Annabel offered conventionally.

"Beautiful!" echoed Lily, on just the right note. "Beautiful!"

"Every one was very kind," Hendricks boomed out magnificently.

"The papers have been fine, too," Peets offered, standing, tall and handsome in his black, at the corner of the fireplace. "It's a shame that the old boy couldn't know what they said about him!"

Emily, who had come on for the funeral, and enraged Annabel by appearing in mourning deeper and more strictly correct even than her own, now volunteered a remark. "Even the New York papers had articles," she said languidly.

At that there was a little flutter of movement. The family had every sympathy with Emily in her troubles with Peets, but when she lifted her voice among them they instinctively drew together, even at a moment like this. Her husband, looking down on them, suppressed an impish smile, and intervened. "I thought we would never get here," he said. "Don't they have automobile hearses in this village?"

Hendricks flushed with annoyance. "Of course we do," he replied. "I had arranged for one, and motors instead of carriages, but when mother heard of it she insisted on the old-fashioned kind of funeral. She was in a state about it. 'Your father shall have horses!' she said. There was nothing to do about it, of course, but it made me realize that mother is breaking up."

Annabel said sharply, "Have you only just noticed it?"

"Here comes Uncle Dan," Peets drawled warningly.

Hendricks looked up quickly. The old lawyer stood in the doorway, peering, after a fashion which had grown on him, from under lowered brows. "Where is your mother?" he demanded.

"Up-stairs. She will be down at once, and we will all have tea."

"It was a lovely funeral, wasn't it, Mr. Lunt?" It was Lily who asked, nervously filling in the sudden silence.

"Oh, very lovely. I thought the furnace stack

made of white carnations was especially exquisite. Pete would have liked that."

They laughed uncomfortably, and Hendricks drew Daniel Lunt portentously aside. His manner, always a trifle magnificent, had gained in pomposity with his consciousness that he was now the head of the family. "Do you think that we had better read the will this afternoon, sir? Are you sure it won't be too much for my mother?"

The old lawyer looked at him dryly. "I've never seen anything too much for her yet," he declared. "But it may be too much for you, Hendricks."

The banker smiled at him in patronizing condescension. He was thinking that he had done well to engage a younger man for his personal adviser. Old Lunt had a great reputation, but he was trying at times; he was breaking up, too. "I'll take a chance," he said, with what jocosity he could summon.

"Your mother wishes everything settled as soon as possible," Lunt told him. "She knows that Emily will want to hear the will read before she goes back to New York."

"Hum. Yes,—Emily. Of course." What a fool Peets had been! Hendricks had once spoken to his father about the danger of leaving a fortune to the family profligate, and Peter had assured him that he had no intention of doing so. . . . Emily would be in a rage. . . . He wondered if he had been named trustee of his brother's share, and, in that case, if Peets would come to hate him. He hoped not, but you never could tell what animosities wills might arouse.

"Where is Jimmie?" Lunt asked Annabel.

"He took the girls home from the cemetery. I thought that it was no place for them here." She glanced from Peets to Emily nervously, and Hendricks coughed a dry banker's cough which sprang, not from his bronchial tubes, but from his nerves.

Suddenly Lily's toneless voice trailed across the silence, "I have always liked that picture," she said, her eyes fixed on a Monet which hung on the left of the chimney.

Emily sat suddenly upright. "So have I," she said sharply. "It is just the color for my new drawing-room. . . . Isn't it, Peets?"

"I dare say."

"Well, I like it too," Annabel said resentfully, "and it is easy enough to change the color of a drawing-room, Emily, to suit a beautiful thing like that picture!"

They were all three aroused, and glaring at one another, when a new voice intervened. "Tea?" it said. "That's good!" It was Ann.

Every one jumped, and those who were seated stood up, with gestures of offering their chairs. As she came toward them Hendricks thought how much his mother had failed in the last week, and Daniel Lunt thought how miraculously well she looked, considering everything. She had taken off the thick veil which had shrouded her all day, and made her hair tidy. Her black dress was high and severe about her throat: above it the lines in her face were tragically cast, and her eyes, always deep-set, looked cavernous. Nevertheless, she managed to smile, and she and Lunt were the only persons in the room who were completely natural.

"We'll all drink a great deal of tea," she said, as she filled the cups, "and then we'll feel better. . . . Hendricks, have an English muffin. And do you mind telling Ruggles to bring in some cherry brandy? Thank you. . . . Annabel, do eat a cake:—never mind your figure, for once! Dan—you've had a hard day: if Peter were here I know he would offer you some Bourbon whisky. No? Another cup of tea, then? Yes,—I know: cream and sugar,—a great deal of

sugar! I am sorry all the children have gone home. I miss them. Your H. C. is about somewhere, Hendricks. Doesn't he want tea?"

"I don't know what he wants." His father spoke venomously, for his first-born was beyond his understanding. "I don't know what he is doing here. I didn't ask him to stay."

His mother looked over at him with slightly lifted eyebrows. "I did," she said, and a momentary silence fell on the little group.

"That's all right, then," Hendricks murmured at length, with false joviality. "But you spoil the boy."

"I am very fond of him," Ann said simply. "I suppose he will be going back to college to-morrow?"

"Yes," Lily answered. "He only came on for the —for to-day."

Daniel Lunt got slowly to his feet, and carried his cup over to Ann. "You are not eating anything," he said reproachfully.

"I don't seem to be hungry,—but I have drunk my tea. I am all right, Dan." She caught his hand for a moment, and pressed it briefly. "You have been very good to me to-day," she whispered. "No one understands as you do."

When every one had had all the tea he could drink, and Ruggles had majestically removed the tray and unwillingly shut the door behind himself, Hendricks took charge of the conclave. "If you will all sit down," he said, "we will get to the,—ah,—the business of the—of this—this afternoon."

"Oh, shoot it straight, Hendricks," Peets drawled, grinning at his banker-brother. "We're no ladies' club."

Hendricks turned red. "There are decencies—" he murmured inconclusively.

"Let's be decent, by all means," Peets agreed urbanely, "but let's get on."

"We are here to-day in order to— Who is that at the door?"

It was Jimmie Loomis who appeared in the crack, red-faced and nervous. "It's just me," he said ingratiatingly. "That's all."

"Jimmie, you are interrupting everything!" was Annabel's wifely comment.

"Nonsense!" her mother interposed. "Jimmie, here is a glass of cherry brandy for you, and Ruggles will give you some cake. No? I'm sorry. . . . Now, Hendricks,—what next? Can't your Uncle Dan read the will? I'm like Peets: I want to get it over."

Hendricks was affronted at having the ceremonies taken out of his hands in so summary a fashion. "Certainly," he said stiffly.

Daniel Lunt came forward at that, and stood looking them over for an instant, from under his heavy brows. Every one sat up straighter, and Annabel laughed a little, nervously. After all, it was a dramatic moment: the secret of the disposition of one of the country's great fortunes lay in the thin fold of paper in the old lawyer's hand. "I am afraid you are going to be disappointed," he told them, and the tension tightened. His eyes came around the circle to Ann, and rested on her face. "You'll all be disappointed, I think."

"Well," the voice was Peets', suddenly grown harsh. "Let's go!"

Daniel Lunt drew a chair under the brass and onyx table lamp, and, with maddening precision, adjusted his reading glasses. He opened the crackling paper in a silence as deep as that which blessed the raw new grave in Graceland Cemetery, under its mound of flowers. Then he looked up, and spoke. "This is not a very old will," he said. "Your father destroyed all other wills and testaments only two years ago, and instructed me to draw this one. It is very brief."

Peets' eyes met his wife's, in a sudden community of dread. Two years ago? Did that mean that he was cut off?

The old man was still talking. "I advised him against this disposition of his property, because I thought it hard on your mother, but I could not move him." He then began to read. "I, Peter Smith, being of sound mind and memory. . . . Payment of just debts. . . . To the art museum of Chicago I give all my paintings, subject, however, to the possession, use and enjoyment by my beloved wife, Ann Smith, of said paintings or such part of them as she may desire to retain, use and enjoy during the term of her natural life."

An audible little sigh from Lily made Lunt pause for an instant, and look up over his glasses. Then he continued, "All the residue of the property of which I shall die possessed, both real, personal and mixed, I hereby give to my said beloved wife, Ann Smith. . . . Executrix of my said will without bond. . . . In the event that my said wife pre-deceases me, the aforesaid property shall be equally divided between my three children, Hendricks Cortlandt Smith, Peter Smith, Jr., and Annabel Smith Loomis. . . . In the event of the death of any child. . . ." The old man's voice droned on, reading incomprehensible things about lawful issue, and contingencies, and finally stopped. There was an instant's silence.

It was broken by Ann. "Dan, what does it mean?" she demanded, dread in her voice.

"It means," Hendricks answered her icily, "that my father has seen fit to cut us all off."

"He hasn't left us a damn cent!" Peets further elucidated. "Not one of us, by God!"

"The art museum!" Annabel cried. "And we,—his own children!"

Ann's questioning eyes turned to Daniel Lunt.

"Dan,—does it really mean that I have to have it all?"

"I am afraid it does, my dear."

"But,—how terrible!" She made a helpless little gesture of protest.

"He trusted you, Ann. . . . You said once, long ago, that Peter had not kept his original agreement with you, but when it came to the end, he couldn't be satisfied to leave his fortune in any hands but yours. 'It's as much hers as mine,' he said to me. 'We've been partners so long!'"

Ann had not cried since her husband's death, but now scalding tears began to flow, and she buried her face in her hands. How unjust she had been,—long ago, in her hard youth! How could she live without Peter? How could she face the burden of life without him?

It was little Jimmie Loomis who went over to her, and put his dapper arm about her shoulders. "Why shouldn't you have the money?" he demanded belligerently, glaring defiantly at Hendricks and Peter. "Who has a better right to it, I'd like to know? As far as that goes, we're better off without it, anyhow!"

That brought them around, ashamed: Hendricks made a hollow pretense of hiding his chagrin, and Peets apologized, handsomely. As for Annabel and Lily, they resented the gift of the pictures more than the loss of a fortune which would have bought other and possibly finer collections: they looked at the coveted Monet with tears in their eyes. Only Emily remained aloof, savoring the bitter fruit of her life.

CHAPTER XL

THE LAST CHAPTER

It was two years later, and a hot day in June. Under the high roof of the Coliseum the heat was terrific, and the delegates on the floor of the big building sat, for the most part, without their coats. The crowd which encircled and enclosed them rose tier on tier of sweltering humanity. Men mopped their faces, and women, more sanely dressed in light stuffs, fanned themselves desperately with programs which bore in red letters the words, "Republican National Convention," or with flat paper fans on which President Taft's smiling face was reproduced. Boys with wire baskets of luke-warm pop struggled through the crowded aisles, selling their wares as though they were offering nectar.

The wildest confusion prevailed, for this was the last day of a convention which was group-ruled in a time when naive political altruism was temporarily and stridently vocal. On the platform a thin man with gray hair and a clever, closed face was banging on the stand in front of him with a gavel, in calm and unavailing effort to restore order. From various parts of the hall other men were screaming "R-r-obber!" He seemed unruffled by the epithet. Clustered behind him were his friends, a knot of oldish and cynical gentlemen, for the most part dapper, in spite of the heat. On the floor half the delegates were on their feet, and shouting.

Through the pandemonium a rough sort of rhythm persisted.

"Choo! Choo!
Toot! Toot! Toot!"

Sounds resembling steam whistles punctuated it. It was democracy's comment on the political steam roller at work, for in nineteen hundred and twelve democracy had not yet been ironed entirely flat.

Representatives of one state were on their feet, and chanting in staccato insistence, "We want Teddy! WE WANT TEDDY!" Other states took it up, and through the clamor came California's battle cry, "Eat 'em alive! Eat 'em alive! ROOSEVELT! ROOSEVELT! ROOSEVELT!"

On the floor about their standard there was a knot of gesticulating men: one of them, red-faced and dynamic, was endeavoring to make a speech. "I protest!" he could occasionally be heard shouting above the din. "I protest!" He was drowned out by friends in the Arizona delegation, who were suddenly moved to spring to their feet and shout "Thieves! Thieves! Thieves!"

From various parts of the floor ineffective and apoplectic gentlemen were on their feet screaming, "I rise to a point of information!" or "Mr. Chairman, I make a point of order!"

Unexpectedly the chair recognized one of them: he was a Taft delegate whose seat was questioned, and triumph ran through the conservative forces. They had been, for the most part, cynically apathetic, but now they shot to their feet shouting, "Root! Root! Root!"

There was a sudden intense silence, which was taken magnificent advantage of by the state of New Jersey.

"Rah! Rah! Rah!
Who are we?
We are the delegates from New Jer-see!
Are we in it?
Just you wait
Till we give Teddy twenty-eight straight!"

Pandemonium broke loose at that, and laughter swept the galleries. The chairman advanced to the edge of the platform, and lifted his hand for silence.

"All aboard!" yelled a bystander, and the demonstration began all over again. In the midst of it a hitherto unheralded spectator, a woman in the front row of the balcony, dropped over the rail a huge banner on which was a roughly painted portrait of Theodore Roosevelt, and the crowd went wild. It was the spark the tow needed in order to burst into flame, and before the conflagration of enthusiasm which ensued, the chairman retreated and sat down, patient and sardonic. Cheers swept the building. The woman in the balcony waved her banner and bowed hysterically.

Hendricks Smith was on the platform a little way behind the presiding officer. A cold rage possessed him. "They have gone mad,—that's all!" he kept repeating to Daniel Lunt, who sat in front of him. He could not understand how it was possible for anything so scandalous to happen as this public rebellion against the leaders of the Republican Party.

The old lawyer finally turned, and grinned at him with a touch of malice. "My eyes aren't what they used to be," he confessed, "but isn't that young H. C. over there leading the cheering?" He indicated a raw-boned, red-headed young man who had turned his back upon the platform, and was waving his arms over his head in an effort to bring into unison the enthusiasm in the section behind him. "Teddy!" he was shouting, in a frayed and cracked voice. "We want Teddy!"

Hendricks blushed, which was something he did not

often do. "It is," he admitted briefly, and, in spite of the shame which devoured him at the sight of the exhibition his son was making of himself, his mind had room for a passing conviction that Daniel Lunt was no longer what he had been. . . . He wished that his mother were not so completely under his influence, and then his thoughts flashed back to young H. C. "Thank God, I have other sons," he said icily, and he dwelt with unusual satisfaction on the culprit's younger brothers, who, in calmer moments, he was inclined to find dull.

"I've had enough of this," he said abruptly. "I think I will walk over to mother's, and see if she will give me some lunch." He could not bear, any longer, to sit inertly watching his son make a fool of himself.

Outside the Coliseum there was the usual rabble. Men were selling celluloid buttons ornamented with pictures of President Taft or pictures of Theodore Roosevelt. . . . They were selling flags, at this moment when Hendricks was deeply ashamed of his country. . . . They were selling badges which read, "Thou Shalt Not Steal. Blaine Club of Cincinnati."

The banker bought a Taft button, and inserted it in his hitherto innocent buttonhole. He was in a fine glow of indignation. Waves of clamorous enthusiasm swelled out to him from the packed hall he had left, and if he had been alone he might have shaken an impotent fist at it. Fools! All this poppy-cock about the common people! All this Socialistic nonsense about full dinner pails! Envy,—that's what it was! Envy of those who had on the part of those who weren't smart enough to get! He would like to see what would be in their dinner pails if every crack-brained, muck-raking reformer had his way!

He walked over to Prairie Avenue, and nothing by the way served to cool his rage. The old neighborhood was altogether vile; he passed houses where paint blis-

tered from sagging brick fronts, and yards which were filthy with an accumulation of ancient newspapers. . . . Here and there a fly-blown shop had been introduced into the first story of a dwelling house. He was enraged, merely in passing. These were the abodes of the common people. This, he told himself, was what they preferred,—what they perversely chose to do to a once decent neighborhood.

The block on which his mother lived was scarcely better. Her house, with its spotless layers of white curtains confronting a dilapidated street, was conspicuously decent amid its sordid surroundings, although because of the smoke no amount of tending could make the grass in her yard grow green, nor the elm trees hold their leaves after mid-summer. The houses on either side of her had recently been sold: on the left there now was a sanatorium, with discreet lettering on the door which informed the passer-by that there the drug habit might be cured. On the right, across the street, a printing establishment had moved in, and all night long a thin and ghoulish blue light shone from its windows. Ann complained that she couldn't sleep because of it, but she would not consider moving.

"No, indeed," she said firmly. "I shall stay right here until I die!"

Hendricks rang the bell, and as he waited he drew out his watch,—a habit he had which, had she been a spirited woman, would long since have driven his Lily to divorce. The door was opened in less than a minute, and he had, after all, to deny himself the satisfaction of saying that his mother's servants were imposing on her. Everything, that day, contributed to his annoyance.

Ann was glad to see him; she was just sitting down to luncheon. "Have I missed anything?" she demanded. "It is so warm that I thought I wouldn't venture out. I gave H. C. my ticket."

"Oh,—is that where he got it?" Hendricks had wondered how his son had managed to secure a seat in the very midst of the most lavish contributors. He became enraged. "Don't give it to him again! He is disgracing us all!"

One of his mother's most irritating characteristics was a tendency to question masculine pronunciamentos. She did so now. "How?"

Hendricks scowled. "He is tied up with this insurgent rabble."

"Do you mean that he is for Roosevelt?"

"Yes."

"Well, I am myself."

"You don't know what you are talking about!" her son said rudely. "What do you think father would have said if he could have heard you talk like that?"

"I don't know," Ann confessed honestly, and added courageously, "I never did agree with your father in polities."

"I suppose Uncle Dan encourages you in this sort of thing?" He couldn't, while he was feeling so delightfully disagreeable, keep the major irritation of his life out of the discussion.

"Bless you no, Hendricks,—he is the lawyer for the Steel Corporation! I think I just naturally like people who upset apple carts."

Her son looked at her in helpless irritation. This was what his father's mad will had brought him to. He had not only to swallow the humiliation of having inherited nothing from one of the conspicuously rich parents of the country, but he was obliged to talk to his mother as if she were a reasonable human being, to soothe her and flatter her, in order to have any say at all as to how her fortune should be handled. He had to be careful, too, for as it was she had removed her checking account from the Chicago National because she suspected him of supervision. And she was not yet

seventy: she might live for a long time. "Peets is in town," he shot at her unexpectedly.

"Yes, I know."

"What does he want?"

His mother moved her shoulders a little, restlessly. "What do you all want? Money."

Hendricks passed the implication by. "What for?"

"He wants to go into business."

"Peets?"

She nodded. "He wants to buy an interest in something."

"I trust you won't be foolish enough to consider such a thing."

"I don't know yet. I haven't had time to look into it."

Hendricks swallowed hard. He knew that his mother was extremely unlikely to take any steps which he deprecated, but he could never be assured that she would not, at any time, make an exception to this general rule. "I'll be glad to look into it for you."

"If I want you to I will let you know."

"I saw in the paper this morning that Annabel had given her Girls' Summer Camp outfit fifty thousand dollars."

"Yes, I saw it too."

"Of course I knew you must have given it to her."

"Did you?"

"I suppose it is all right,—but you must come pretty near spending your income, mother."

"I never have yet, but perhaps I may, with practise. . . . I'm going to have my portrait painted. That is a good beginning."

Hendricks was startled, for this was a new development. "By whom?"

"Sargent."

"Who put that into your head?"

"Peets."

"Hum. I'd rather have the old one in the crinoline."

"Perhaps you will, my dear."

She was singularly irritating, and he did not stay long. Instead he went back to the convention, and subjected himself to further disgrace. H. C. was not in his seat, but presently his father saw him, down on the floor, hand in glove with the worst offenders. His friends spoke to him about it, pityingly. . . . On the whole, he had a miserable day.

2

That night at Orchestra Hall the Progressive Party was born, and the morning paper was filled with accounts of the event. The fact that President Taft had been renominated at the Coliseum was almost lost sight of, and Hendricks was enraged. He read Colonel Roosevelt's remarks aloud at the breakfast table, while Lily pretended to listen, and now and then said, "Sti! Sti!" in absent-minded indignation.

Suddenly her husband banged the paper down on the table; the glasses rocked, and slopped a little water on the cloth. "Of course H. C. was there," he shouted, "but wouldn't you know he would have to get his name in the paper? Listen to this! 'Son of President of Chicago National supports Teddy!' Where is the boy? I'll tell him that he will have to choose between this—this—insanity, or me!"

"Is some one paging me?" It was young H. C. who sauntered into the room. "I think it's cooler," he announced, and bent to kiss his mother's cheek as he went to take his seat at the table.

"Wait a moment!" his father boomed at him. "Is what I read in the paper true?"

"Probably not, father, if you ask me. . . . When I am told that as a people we have no imagination, I

always remember the great American press, and deny the charge with patriotic indignation."

"Don't joke with me, sir! Is it true that you—you —associated yourself with that disgraceful gathering at Orchestra Hall last night?"

"I was there,—yes."

"Just a moment before you sit down, if you please. It may interest you to know what your mother and I were discussing, as you came in."

Young H. C. draped himself picturesquely over the high back of the dining-room chair. "Something tells me, sir, that you were engaged in talking about me," he said, with his most beguiling smile.

"We were. I was telling your mother that you would have to give up one of two things,—your politics, or your father."

"Too late for politics. I signed up last night."

"Then you will have to retract this morning. I dare say there will be plenty of other hot-headed fools doing the same thing."

Young H. C. straightened up, and pushed his empty chair in to the table with deliberate and meticulous attention. "No can do," he said. "So, if I am right in assuming that I am to be cut off without a strawberry, I'll be going along where my mouth won't water, if it's all the same to you."

"Where will you go?" In spite of her training in repression, Lily's voice was anguished.

"Down to grandma's, of course. Don't you worry about me, my dear! I'll be living on the fat of the wicked steel corporation!"

In a moment he was gone, and his father was looking across the table at his tearful mother. He felt rather flat. "This is what your indulgence has come to!" he said disagreeably, but what he meant was, "This unfortunate happening is the result of my own bad temper."

3

Ann took a house at Bar Harbor that summer, a great palace of a place which she regretted from the moment she was committed to it. She knew that she would be lonely, for her children, who had encouraged her to rent, were vague about visiting her.

"How can I leave home?" Annabel said fretfully. "Anna is nineteen, and you know what that means! Boys, all the time! And these modern girls! One would think they had never heard of chaperons!"

Ann was sorry for her daughter. With the single exception of young H. C., who she felt could do no wrong, she had become a fierce champion of her children against her grandchildren, although when she was actually in touch with her younger descendants she found herself softening toward them, in spite of the fact that they bewildered her. They never gave her time to think, and their loud quick speech beat on her ears like an alien tongue, but they were lovely to look at, and in spite of herself pride in her consciousness that she was a determining factor in their being on earth undermined her disapproval.

Hendricks was disciplining his mother because she was supporting his rebellious son; he said, briefly, that it would be impossible for him to get away in a summer when the market, owing to the unrest caused by the political campaign, was in such a dangerous condition. Ann never questioned the excuse of business, but she did hope that young H. C. might come to her for at least a fortnight.

"I wish I could," he said, regret in his voice. "You know I love that Maine coast,—but it is the Mississippi Valley for me! I shall have to spend my summer organizing."

This was Greek to his grandmother. "I'll get you a yacht if you will come," she said mendaciously, but

the boy persisted in his refusal. He found his first experience on an uncharted political sea even more thrilling than the wide Atlantic.

Peets came to her, however, as soon as she was settled, and brought his two children with him. His daughter was a lovely creature, about to make her début in New York in the following winter, and his son was a handsome youth with a roving eye and a reputation at college for being a fast traveler. They had not been at Bar Harbor a day before they were involved in a bewildering series of picnics, cruises and swimming parties. Ann said her house was like a railroad station, with some one always coming or going, but she liked having Peets there. He found it possible to spare her an extraordinary amount of time, and in her gratitude she rewarded him to an extent which would have infuriated Hendricks, had he known of it.

The threatened portrait was painted that summer, while under Peets' influence. Mr. Sargent came to tea one afternoon, and looked Ann over with a disquieting professional eye. "Somehow," he said, "I don't see you as a meek old lady in a black dress. Suppose we try color,—and jewels."

"If I have to choose between being an old lady or a haridan, there is no question but that I prefer the latter," Ann told him smartly, and went forth to order a gown to be painted in.

She wrote to Hendricks, and requested him to send her all her jewels, which had reposed, for the greater part of the time since Peter's death, in a safety deposit box in the Chicago National. He did so with some misgivings, and the young man from the bank who brought them on delivered a letter from the president, in which he cautioned his mother against losing them in terms which caused her to walk straight out to the porch, and present to her granddaughter a pearl chain which Lily had long admired.

She thoroughly enjoyed having her portrait painted. She felt supremely important, sitting straight up in a chair, rather cold in a low cut blue velvet dress, absorbing all the attention of a personable and distinguished man. She blazed with jewels: her large black pearls were in her ears; the string which had been Peter's last gift to her was around her throat, and diamonds set on a platinum thread twinkled over the blue velvet of her dress. Peets used to come and watch her at the sittings, and tell her that she was as magnificent as a Begum.

When the portrait was finished, her first reaction was incredulity. Could she be that grim old woman, smiling with those cynical lips? She hated the disillusioned look in the faded eyes confronting her. When people saw the picture, however, their comments reconciled her to it. They raved about it, and congratulated her so ardently on owning it that gradually she came to take pride in it. After all, Peter had educated her to believe that skill in technique was of greater importance than the accident of a likeness.

4

She fled the fogs of September, and arrived home to find the political campaign in full swing. Young H. C., returned from his organization trip, was domiciled on Prairie Avenue, and appeared to have every intention of spending the remainder of his natural life there. For his grandmother this was a mixed pleasure, as the boy's father refused to come to his mother's house while his son received asylum in it, and she found that she could not face a disagreeable situation as lightheartedly as she had when she was younger. When she thought of Hendricks' displeasure she was shaken with regret, and she lost sleep over it, but on the other hand she loved to have young people about her. The mere

sight of her grandson running down her stairs filled her with a solid satisfaction, and he had a habit of singing when he took his cold bath in the morning which delighted her. She opened her door so that she might hear him, and smiled as she listened, nodding her head in time to his clear tones.

He talked to her interminably of extraordinary things which he was oddly convinced would set the awry world straight. Strange terms such as Initiative and Referendum and Direct Primary were always being discussed by him with amazing passion, and, while his grandmother never had the least idea what they meant, she luxuriated in his enthusiasm. Now and then, it is true, he hit upon something which gave her a sensation of being attacked, when she would shut him up, dryly, but she did not argue with him. She could not. She did not seem to be able to transmute into thought those burning prejudices which were coming to mean more to her than anything else. It was only when guided by Daniel Lunt, who was of her own generation and knew what she felt, that she had any sensation of adequacy in argument. She would have been lost without him, although nothing could have made her admit it.

H. C. undertook her political education with engaging blitheness: he was soon convinced that he had won her to the cause of Progressivism, and he used to grin with pleasure at the sight of Theodore Roosevelt's lithographs in the old steel king's windows. Once he even took her to a meeting where he spoke. It was not a very important gathering, for H. C. was a beginner, and no drawing card, and it was held in a grubby hall in an outlying ward. His grandmother climbed the steep stairs leading to it with increasing distaste; at the door she paused, and taking in a room swimming in a haze of smoke, where rows of listless voters were punctuated by occasional spittoons,

she said sharply to her grandson that she should think he would begin cleaning up politics by cleaning up places like this. He could see her from the platform, and something more instinctive than political principles made him admire her as she sat, aloof, disdainful and undeniably distinguished. A great old girl, he decided, catching her eye, and grinning at her.

Ann disliked the meeting. The men who spoke trod on her privileged feet much more ruthlessly than young H. C. ever had, and her reaction to them was much what Peter's might have been. When her grandson came forward she was uncomfortably thrilled: it made her afraid, sitting alone in the crowd, to be so pitifully shaken. . . . The boy was very handsome, standing before them pouring out the burning indignanation of his young soul, and his exaltation shook his audience, temporarily at least, from indifference. . . . His grandmother clapped him eagerly: she was quite carried away by him, and when the crowd sang, *Onward, Christian Soldiers,* she joined in with her uncertain old voice, but after it was all over she was cruelly tired,—much too tired to sleep.

5

On the rare occasions when Ann saw her elder son, he predicted dire things of young H. C., but the boy actually exceeded the worst anticipations of his family. He went west again just before the election, but his grandmother thought nothing of it, as he had come and gone unquestioned throughout the campaign. This time his stay was brief: four days after his departure she awoke early to hear his clear young voice calling her. She got up in a great flurry. "What is it?" she asked. "What is it?" Anything unexpected upset her horridly.

"He says come down at once: he has a surprise for you," her maid told her.

Ann dressed as quickly as she could; she was very nervous; she said, later, that she had a premonition.

The boy met her at the foot of the stairs. She thought that he was flustered also, although he smiled at her with the radiance she always found disarming. "Feeling strong this morning?" he inquired. "You'll have to see me through something, grandma."

He gave her no time to answer, but swept her into the library. Some one was there, sitting, in a tentative sort of way, on a chair by the window. It was a girl, who rose as they came in. She was little, dark and quick, and she, too, was nervous. "Who—who is it?" Ann demanded.

Young H. C. left her, and went over to take the strange girl's hand.

"It's my wife," he said simply.

The commotion in the family was tremendous. It was one thing for Hendricks Cortlandt Smith, Jr., to hold Socialistic views on politics,—after all, a surprising number of people one knew were, that year, inclined that way, and, when it came to the last analysis, Theodore Roosevelt was a gentleman,—but quite another for him to marry, in a hole-in-a-corner fashion, an unknown young woman from the rural state of Kansas. Information about her began to seep through the ramifications of the Smith connection. She was a farmer's daughter. . . . She had spoken in public for woman's suffrage. . . . She had been a librarian.

"A working girl!" Lily moaned. "It is all very well for Hendricks' mother to say that his father was a farmer's son,—but a girl who has worked for her living!" She cried and cried, devastated by the degradation of her first-born.

Hendricks himself had one stormy interview with the boy. "You have made your bed and you must lie in it," he told him sternly. "I must think of your

sisters: I will have nothing to do with this girl you say you have married."

"Hell!" young H. C. said explosively. "Who wants you to?"

This was a fine gesture, but, as a matter of fact, his grandmother wanted just that. She was immensely distressed at Hendricks' attitude toward his son, and perturbed at being involved in his wrath, but she could not help liking the valiant little bride who was causing so great a commotion, nor resist the romantic appeal of the persecuted lovers, and when her son came storming down to see her she had to tell him so, although she was half sick with trepidation at the prospect of a scene.

"If you hadn't encouraged H. C. this would never have happened!" his wrathful parent shouted at her. "If you abet him in this, God knows what he may do next!"

"He can't marry two wives, at any rate," Ann said dryly. She clasped her hands tight, in order that Hendricks should not see that they trembled.

"What will they live on?"

"Why not on me, like the rest of you?"

"You mean to provide for them?"

Ann nodded. "I shall give young H. C. two hundred thousand dollars for a wedding present, and I hope that they will stay on with me for a time, at least."

"How can you have the girl living here, if no one will have anything to do with her?"

"I shall introduce her," his mother told him superbly. "I shall have an afternoon tea for her." She was delightfully exhilarated by her own amazing courage.

For a time it seemed as though it would not be possible for her to carry out this threat, owing to opposition on the part of the bride herself. "I think we

had better wait for H. C.'s family to come around," she said. "Now that he has a job, they are sure to, sooner or later."

Ann was insistent, however. "My dear Barbara," she said sternly, "you must allow me to do what I think correct."

When the invitations were issued, the family was again shaken to its depths. "Mother has forced our hands," Hendricks told Annabel. "If we don't appear, there will be more talk than ever."

"We'll have to go, of course. . . . And I think the girl looks like a lady, Hendricks."

There could be no doubt about that, when she stood up beside the old woman who was the despotic ruler of her clan, and shook hands with curious Chicago. Compared to the sturdy Smiths, her small perfection was exquisite, and people liked her responsive, intelligent face.

"Take a good look at her and tell me if you blame me," the bridegroom said to his mother, and, on following this advice, she was unable to maintain the attitude of cool aloofness which had been prescribed by her husband; she went up to her daughter-in-law and kissed her warmly.

After that, even Hendricks was obliged to come around; as he had said, his mother had forced their hands.

6

Notwithstanding the triumph of this general reconciliation, Ann was shattered by the strain of the feud which preceded it. She went to bed the day after her tea, and with ill-omened docility submitted to the ministrations of a trained nurse. She was, all at once, extraordinarily enfeebled, and when she was about again, she seemed older, and less self-reliant. Her children became alarmed about her, and insistent that she desert the old house, in order to move nearer them.

"You don't realize how difficult it is to get away over here to see you all the time," Annabel told her fretfully. "Even in an automobile, it takes the better part of an hour! If you lived near us we could run in often."

They talked to her repeatedly about apartments which were miracles of comfort,—which had a wonderful view of the lake. Even young H. C. wanted her to take one. "We'll get a little flat near you," he said, "and come to see you every day."

His grandmother knew what that meant, for she had heard the tune before. It meant that he, too, was straining at the leash, and she found it difficult to face being alone again, after the luxury of young companionship.

She resisted until an untoward happening doomed the old neighborhood for her. She was lying sleepless in her bed, and the trained nurse had left her for the night when she heard loud and violent voices beneath her window. She was frightened, and rang her bell, but before any one had time to come, shots punctuated the night,—two of them, in quick succession. Had she herself been hit, she could have been scarcely more prostrated than she was at the mere reports. . . . She lay still, and heard first the sound of running feet outside, and then confusion springing to life indoors. . . . Voices, and young H. C.'s door flinging open.

"Darling,—do be careful!" she heard his wife beseech him, and immediately she began to tremble for her favorite. She could hear him leaping down the stairs. . . . She knew that he would be shot! . . . Feebly, she got out of bed and timorously approached the window. . . . She could make out the dim, sprawled figure of a man lying across the sidewalk, just under the corner lamp-post. Young H. C., half dressed, was bending over him. She rapped on the pane in an effort to attract his attention, but he re-

mained absorbed. In a moment Barbara joined him, and she could see them speaking together, over the prostrate body. . . . Ruggles appeared, and then the nurse,—her nurse, for whom she had been fruitlessly ringing. The girl knelt beside the inert figure for a moment; then, looking up, she shook her head.

The sound of a distant gong began faintly to beat the air. . . . It grew stronger. In a few moments a police ambulance swung around the corner, and came to an abrupt stop, spilling out men in blue uniforms. There was a quick interchange of talk below. . . . Between them, the policemen lifted the man, and bundled him into the wagon. Two of them ran down the street, and the three young people came back into the house. . . . The old lady up-stairs wondered if they had locked the door, and when quiet was again restored, she went down through the terrifying dark to see.

After that, she was afraid to stay. The following day she sent for Daniel Lunt, and instructed him to notify the directors of the art museum that they might send at any time for what pictures they wanted from her husband's collection.

7

Daniel Lunt turned in at the doorway of a grandiose apartment facing the lake, and crossed a wide lobby to the elevator. Inside the cage, he faced in the mirrors which lined it, an eagle-featured old man, whose hair, quite white, was worn in an old-fashioned sweep above his deep-set eyes. It dated him, that sweep. His friend Stephen A. Douglas had worn his hair like that, in the sixties. . . . A long time ago.

The cage shot upward, and came to an abrupt stop. Lunt crossed a diminutive hallway, and pushed a button set in the wall: in a moment a gravely correct

butler opened the door for him, and told him that Mrs. Smith was at home.

When he entered his old friend's apartment he was, as always, conscious of a feeling of lively dislike for the spurious Frenchified grandeur of the place. . . . Elaborate trim, and low ceilings: how distasteful modern building was! . . . The drawing-room was pleasant enough, however, filled as it was with things with which he had long been familiar. The old mirror which Ann had brought home from her first trip abroad was over the fireplace on the side wall, and Lunt liked to think how many fleeting moments of his past had been reflected on its facile surface. Life was like that, he thought. People came and went, and no matter how charming or how ugly a reflection they made upon the speculum of time, they passed, and others took their places. . . . Only a few persisted, creatures of the heart rather than the eye.

At the windows, framing a gray nocturne of lake and sky, hung Ann's curtains of old rose brocade: shortened to fit apartment windows, they had lost much of the elegance they had long enjoyed under the sixteen foot ceilings on Prairie Avenue, but notwithstanding their shorn condition they gave the room a pleasant aroma of the past.

The walls were covered with the less distinguished pictures from Peter's collection. The more valuable canvases hung in the new Smith gallery at the art museum, but many of these had beauty, and all had the charm of old association. At either end of the long room was a portrait of its owner, and Lunt's humor was always tickled by the contrast between the two canvases. On one hand was Ann's girlhood likeness, with its wide-spreading crinoline. In the old man's opinion, women had never looked as attractive as they did in clothes like that, but he was aware that this conviction betrayed his period, and, catching him-

self at it, he smiled sardonically. Ann must have been an enchanting girl, he thought. Not one of her good-looking descendants had so romantic an appeal as the young creature in the white muslin and the blue sash, who looked out at him with grave and innocent eyes. He wished that he had known her then.

"'Standing with reluctant feet,'" he murmured sentimentally to himself.

He could find nothing reluctant about the present-day young women, as they hustled through the world. . . . No reticence. . . . No atmosphere. . . . When their brook and river met they seemed to the old man to take a running dive into the deeper stream, and he wondered if the young fellows he saw going about with the eager creatures got half the thrill those of his generation had. They appeared to, he thought wistfully, as he turned to the other portrait.

It seemed to glare at him from the wall, a piece of perfect modern virtuosity. "Bitter Fruit" he had always said it should be called, with its luminous pearls, its marvelously painted velvets, and its look of having found life out. He hated it, notwithstanding its distinction, for to him Ann seemed to have kept to a remarkable degree her relish for living, and he was unwilling that future generations of her descendants should think of her as a disillusioned old woman. He glanced at the mirror again, midway between the portraits. What soft, beguiling phases in the life of this woman had crossed its insensible plane and passed into oblivion! It knew everything, the old man thought, whimsically. It had been a silent witness to the unfolding years which had changed the inexperienced girl in the blue sash into the old woman decked with jewels, but it would never give up its knowledge.

"Well, Dan," a voice behind him said, "have you come to congratulate me?"

He chuckled. "On being a great grandmother? Never, Ann!"

"I don't mind. It is a darling baby, and Barbara insists that it shall be called for me!"

"I hope she will have red hair!"

"If she is a sweet creature like her mother I shall have no complaints to make."

They sat down, stiffly, on the soft rose brocade sofas which flanked the fire, and Ann busied herself with tea making. She used her old elaborate service, and the customary plates of cakes and elaborate sandwiches were set forth upon a smaller table. "Weak, I suppose?" she inquired dryly.

The old man smiled wryly. "Yes. . . . Tea is bad for that newfangled thing they call a blood-pressure."

"I take only hot water and lemon, myself, but I put a little tea in my cup when I have finished, so Ruggles won't know. Cake?"

"No, thank you. May I pass you some?"

"No, thank you. . . . What were you thinking, just now, when I came in and caught you looking at my picture?"

"I was thinking that you are much nicer than that, Ann."

She peered across at the swaggering portrait. "Every one doesn't know that," she said.

He nodded. "I have been thinking about life, as I waited for you," he confessed. "It is a queer thing to look back on."

His old friend threw him a troubled glance: her eyes had the slightly bewildered look emotion brought into them, and her manner became tremulous. "Life?" she echoed brokenly. "Life is all very well to live, Dan,—but it won't bear thinking about."

THE END